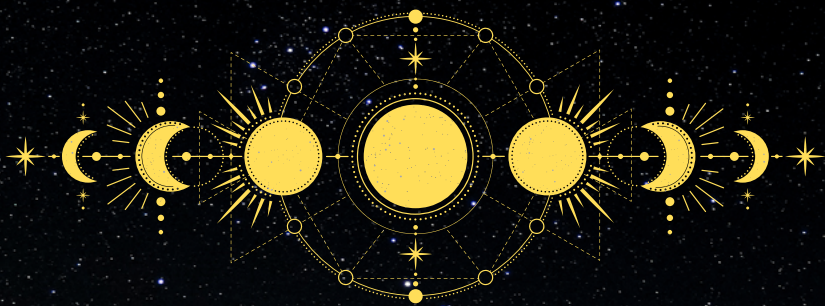




رمضان أقبل فالقلوب مريضة
O Ramadan, come forth, for the hearts are ill

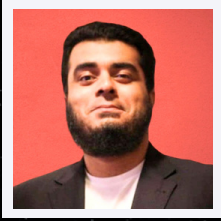


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Introduction

Imam Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله said, "Having the correct understanding of the Deen is light which Allah throws into the heart of the slave of Allah, which is increased by having the Taqwa of Allah and having good intent." [I'laam Al-Muaq'een]

Fasting is of two types. That which is obligatory and that which is voluntary. Our focus in this small book will be on obligatory fasting in the Month of Ramadan alone. Fasting during Ramadan is one of the five Pillars of Islam. Ibn Umar رضي الله عنهم narrated, "Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, 'Islam is based on (the following) five (principles):

1. To testify that there is no deity worth of worship but Allah and Muhammad is Allah's Messenger (ﷺ)
 2. To establish the Salah
 3. To pay Zakat
 4. To perform Hajj
 5. To observe fast during the month of Ramadan."
- [Bukhari]

Allah says,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

O believers! Fasting is prescribed for you—as it was for those before you—so perhaps you will become mindful of Allah. [Surah al-Baqarah, 183]

أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ
الصَّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ
مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

O believers! Fasting is prescribed for you—as it was for those before you—so perhaps you will become mindful of Allah.

[Surah al-Baqarah, 183]

There is a unanimous consensus among all scholars on the obligation of fasting. Scholars like Imams Ibn Mundhir, Ibn Abdil Barr, al-Nawawi, Ibn Qudamah, Ibn Hazm, Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Daqiq, Ibn Hajar, Ibn al-Mulaqqin and countless others have transmitted an ijma on the obligation of fasting Ramadan.

- A person who rejects the obligation of fasting in Ramadan has left the fold of Islam by the consensus of scholars.
- For those that believe in its obligation but do not fast it because of laziness or something similar are committing a major sin. Imam Ahmad رحمه الله was strict on the matter and said that even such people would be outside of the fold of Islam since they did not fast without any valid legal excuse.

What happens to those that knowingly break the fast? Firstly, they are committing a major sin. What's worse is what is awaiting them in the Hereafter. The Prophet ﷺ said, describing a dream that he had seen: "...until I was at the mountain, where I heard loud voices. I asked, "What are these voices?" They said, "This is the howling of the people of Hellfire." Then I was taken (to another place) and I saw people hanging from their hamstrings, with the corners of their mouths torn and dripping with blood. I said, "Who are these?" They said, "The people who broke their fast before it was the proper time to do so (before the time of iftar)." [Sahih al-Targheeb]



Imam al-Dhahabi رحمه الله said, "Among the believers, it is well-established that whoever does not fast in Ramadan without a valid excuse is worse than an adulterer or drunkard; they doubt whether he is even a Muslim at all, and they regard him as a heretic and profligate."



Ahlan Ya Ramadan!

Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to give good news to his Companions with the arrival of Ramadan. He would say:

“Indeed the month of Ramadan has arrived, a blessed month. Allah has prescribed fasting for you. In this month the gates of Paradise are opened and the gates of Hell are closed. The devils are shackled. In Ramadan there is a night better than a thousand months, whoever is prohibited from the good in that night then indeed he has been prohibited from good.” [Targheeb wa Tarheeb]

Imam Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali رحمه الله said, “Some of the scholars said: ‘This hadith is a foundation for some people congratulating others with the month of Ramadan.

- How can one not give good news to the believer with the gates of Paradise opening?
- How can one not give good news to the sinful that the gates of the Hellfire have been closed?
- How can one not give good news to the intelligent one with that the devils are shackled?

Where can this time period be compared to any other time.” [Lata’if al-Ma’arif]



Imam Ibn Battah al-Hanbali رحمه الله cited a consensus of the salaf as well as the khalaf regarding congratulating and praying on the occasions of Hajj, Umrah, the two Eids etc. [al-Ibanah al-Kubrah]

In studying the Islamic sciences, it is usually seen that a word has two meanings. One is the meaning of the word based on the Arabic language and the second is how it is adopted and used by the Shariah in a specific manner.

Fasting or Siyam linguistically refers to Imsak aka refraining, stopping, or holding back from something. According to the Shariah, fasting is an act of worship done for the sake of Allah where one is refraining from food, drink, sexual desires and the rest of the matters which nullify a fast, from the time when the second Fajr appears until sunset for the worship of Allah.

Likewise, for the term Ramadan. Linguistically, the word Ramadan is derived from the Arabic word Ramidha رَمَضَ or Ar-Ramad الرَّمَضُ. It means intense scorching heat. It is also derived from the word Ramdha الرَّمْضاء which means sun-baked sand. The Arabs used to call the land that is heated by the sun – الارض الرمضاء. From this, we learn that, even before the advent of the Prophet Muhammad, the Arabs called this month Ramadan.

When they named the months, they named them according to the seasons in which they fell, and this month fell in the days of intense heat, which is why it was named Ramadan. From a Shariah perspective, scholars explain the reason for naming this month Ramadan is that in this month Allah burns away the sins of His servants out of His immense Mercy and because of the increase in good deeds by the servants.

The correct pronunciation of Ramadan is with a fathah on the letter meem (م), i.e. رَمَضَانَ (Ramadan). To pronounce it with sukun on the letter meem, i.e. رَمْضَانَ (Ramdan) is incorrect.

Fasting was legislated in 2 AH in the month of Sha'ban. The Prophet ﷺ fasted nine complete Ramadans in his lifetime as per the consensus of the scholars. Pause. Reflect for a moment. Many of those reading this might have fasted more Ramadans than those fasted by our beloved Messenger ﷺ. Allah has given us the opportunity to benefit from another Ramadan. Do we truly appreciate this blessing of Allah? Are we ready to make the most of this month?

Let's have a look at the history of the month of Ramadan. Fasting went through three stages as we find narrated by Muadh ibn Jabal and recorded by Imams Ahmad, Ibn Khuzaymah, and Abu Dawud. Our Sheikh Ibrahim Nuhu حفظه الله and Sheikh Maqsood ul Hassan Faizi حفظه الله summarised the three stages as:



Stage 1 - The early Makkan Muslims used to fast on the Day of Ashura and three Days in the month. This was obligatory. Scholars differ over if these days were the three white days or any three days of the month. However, the closest opinion is any three days of the month.

Allah says,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous [Surah al-Baqarah, 183]

Narrated Aishah رضي الله عنها - The Quraish used to fast on the day of Ashura in the Pre-Islamic period, and then Allah's Messenger ordered (Muslims) to fast on it till the fasting in the month of Ramadan was prescribed; whereupon the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "He who wants to fast (on Ashura) may fast, and he who does not want to fast may not fast." [Bukhari]

Stage 2 - Fasting on the Day of Ashura and three days in the month were then made optional. Fasting during the Month of Ramadan was introduced and people initially had the choice to fast these days or stay away wherein fasting was given a higher status. Those who stayed away from fasting had to feed a poor person each day (fidyah). In this stage, a person was allowed to eat, drink, and fulfil their desires subjected to the condition that the time of Isha hadn't entered or that one does not sleep after the breaking of the fast. If the person slept any time after sunset, then it would be haram for him to eat and drink until the following night.

Allah says,

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ
مِّنَ الْهُدَى وَالْفُرْقَانِ ۚ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ
وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ
بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ
عَلَى مَا هَدَيْنَكُم ۖ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

Ramadan is the month in which the Qur'an was revealed as a guide for humanity with clear proofs of guidance and the standard to distinguish between right and wrong. So whoever is present this month, let them fast. But whoever is ill or on a journey, then let them fast an equal number of days after Ramadan. Allah intends ease for you, not hardship, so that you may complete the prescribed period and proclaim the greatness of Allah for guiding you, and perhaps you will be grateful. [Surah al-Baqarah, 185]

Stage 3 - The month of Ramadan was obligatory upon all able Muslims in Madinah in 2 AH; this is the fasting we know today and this is what the Shariah is established upon till the Day of Judgement. At this stage, feeding a needy person is only permissible for an elderly person and a woman who cannot fast. A person is allowed to eat, drink, and fulfil their desires from sunset till dawn irrespective of falling asleep in between.

Allah says,

أَجَلَ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصَّيَامِ الرَّفْتُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ ۚ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ ۗ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ ۖ فَالْآنَ بَشِّرُوهُمْ ۖ وَاتَّبِعُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۚ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ۚ ثُمَّ أَتِمُّوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ ۚ وَلَا تُبَشِّرُوهُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ ۚ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرُبُوهَا ۚ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ

It has been made permissible for you the night preceding fasting to go to your wives (for sexual relations). They are a clothing for you and you are a clothing for them. Allah knows that you used to deceive yourselves, so He accepted your repentance and forgave you. So now, have relations with them and seek that which Allah has decreed for you (i.e., offspring). And eat and drink until the white thread of dawn becomes distinct to you from the black thread (of night). Then complete the fast until the night (i.e., sunset). And do not have relations with them as long as you are staying for worship in the mosques. These are the limits (set by) Allah, so do not approach them. Thus does Allah make clear His verses to the people that they may become righteous. [Surah al-Baqarah, 187]

Imam Ibn al-Jawzi رحمه الله said, "The month of Ramadan to the other months is like Yusuf to his brothers. So, just like Yusuf was the most beloved son to Ya'qub, Ramadan is likewise the most beloved month to Allah." [Bustan al-Arifeen]

Imam al-Buhuti رحمه الله mentions that it is better to address this blessed month as the 'Month of Ramadan' instead of just Ramadan because this is how Allah addressed it in the Qur'an in Surah al-Baqarah:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ

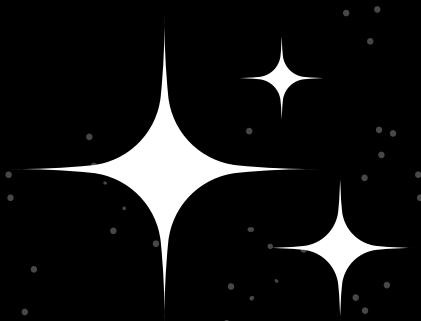
The Month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur'an [Surah Al-Baqarah, 185]



شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ
فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ

The Month of Ramadan in
which was revealed the
Qur'an

[Surah Al-Baqarah, 185]



Why Do We Fast?

Some might say, it is to empathize with the poor, to control our desires, to learn patience, etc. But this is the wrong answer. The correct answer is that we fast because Allah Legislated for us to fast. All the above points are the wisdom and benefits of fasting that scholars have derived. They are not the only reason why fasting is legislated. As slaves, we must understand that Allah is Al-Hakeem (The Most Wise). He does not prescribe any ruling except that there is great wisdom and benefit behind it. As humans with limited knowledge, we may or may not always understand the reason of the legislation. We have less than a pixel and only Allah has the complete picture and more.

Allah mentions one of the reasons of why we fast and says,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you just as it was prescribed for those before you, in order that you may acquire Taqwa.” [Surah Al-Baqarah, 183]

Taqwa is to put between oneself and the Punishment of Allah a barrier and doing good deeds that Allah has commanded one to do and abstaining from doing deeds that Allah has prohibited one to do. Leaving all major and minor sins is taqwa. The similitude is of a person walking across a ground scattered with barbed wire. He is very careful in navigating his path across it and making sure he doesn't get caught up with the barbed wire.

Imam Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله said, "Fasting is abandoning those things beloved and desired by the soul, favoring instead Allah's love and contentment." [Zaad al-Ma'ad]

Imam al-Manawi رحمه الله states, "Fasting was legislated to tame the desires of the soul and to put a stop to what causes one to be in servitude and enslaved by things; if people continue to satisfy their desires they will be enslaved by things and will be disconnected from Allah. Fasting severs any connection to devoting servitude to other than Him and delivers freedom from being bound to what one covets; the meaning of freedom is to own things and not for things to own a person. If they do own and control him, wisdom is upturned and what is to be preferred becomes the opposite and what is most lofty becomes the most low..." [Fayd al-Qadeer]

Imam al-Qastalani رحمه الله said, "It causes one to offer much gratitude for one's blessings and bounties and to acknowledge the previous blessings of satisfying one's need because of hunger and thirst; this causes one to strive to be grateful since something is truly known by its opposite."

He further said, "...the fasting person experiences hunger so he comprehends the severity of the pain of hunger; this urges him to be benevolent to those who are without food. It also causes him to reflect on the harms of being powerless and isolated; as only one who is afflicted with a difficulty can really be aware of it..." [Fawa'id al-Sawm]



Imam Ibn Qudamah رحمه الله states that fasting is a special act of worship and has qualities that are not found in other acts. It is something that has been ascribed to Allah without an explicit reward. This ascription to Allah raises this act to a position of higher nobility.

The virtue of fasting is due to two things:

1. It is a secret inner action that the creation cannot see. It does not have the element of *riya* (showing off) as it cannot be witnessed by others unless informed about it.
2. It subdues and weakens the enemy of Allah. The avenue of the enemy of Allah is through carnal desires and doubts. Fasting subdues desires because desires are fueled by food and drink.

Imam Ibn Qudamah رحمه الله further said in his book *Mukhtasar Minhaj al-Qasidin*, "Fasting has three stages:

1. General Fasting
2. Special Fasting
3. Special Of The Special Fasting

As for general fasting, it is: abstaining the stomach and private parts from carrying out desire.

As for special fasting: it is abstaining the eyes, the tongue, the hands, the feet, the hearing, the eyesight, and all other body parts/senses from sins.



As for the special of the special form of fasting: it is the fasting of the heart from wickedness, isolated thoughts away from Allah (thinking about other than Allah), and abstaining the heart from everything except Allah in its totality."

Sheikh Bin Baz رحمه الله explaining the types of fasts said, "The fasting of the limbs is distancing them from that which Allah had prohibited them from.

- The tongue fasts (refrains) from that which Allah has prohibited it from, for example, backbiting, tale-carrying between people, lying and that which is similar to this.
- The hand fasts (refrains) from that which Allah has prohibited it from, for example, stealing, transgression (oppression), aggression and similar to this.
- Also, the foot keeps away from that which Allah has prohibited it from; so it must not proceed and walk towards that which Allah has prohibited.
- Likewise, the stomach should be safeguarded from eating that which is haram; a person must safeguard his stomach from prohibited food.
- And he safeguards his hearing from listening to that which Allah has prohibited, for example, musical instruments, backbiting, tale-carrying and other than this." [Fatawa Nur Ala ad-Darb]

Some benefits and wisdom of fasting include:

- A means of attaining taqwa
- A means of appreciating the blessings that Allah has Blessed us with
- A means of being more thankful towards Allah
- A means of cutting off evil deeds and vices
- A means to learn how to control and tame our desires
- A means to empathize with the poor and needy
- A means to reduce the influence of Shaytan's whispers and influence on us
- A chance to restart and reboot the system. Purify our nafs
- A means to train and become more disciplined
- A means to develop the quality of Zuhd (asceticism)
- A means to live life as it is meant to be where every action that we do revolves around some form of worship
- A means to humble the person



The High Station of Fasting

Fasting holds a very high station in Islam. A person knowingly gives up food, drink, and sexual desires for the sake of Allah even though all of these were otherwise Halal for him, and on top of that, he desired for them. This is why even if the angels were to fast, hypothetically, it would be of no use as they are programmed not to feel hunger, and nor do they desire it. They were created just to worship. If there is no desire in the heart towards something, the person has no ability to commit it, and there is no urge to fulfil desires, then refusing to eat or drink for even 365 days of the year is of no significance!

Humans on the other hand desire all the above and knowingly abstain themselves just to please Allah. It is only when there is the temptation, a desire in the heart, the environment encourages it, and then a person turns and submits to Allah in obedience while curbing his own desires - this is the worship that Allah has created mankind for and this is why we are better than angels.

We know that fasting is a pillar of Islam. We will now see some of the rewards that are associated with fasting, the high rank that it holds in the Eyes of Allah and much more:

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever fasts a day in the Path of Allah, Allah will create between him and the Hellfire a trench like (the distance of) what is between the sky and the earth." [Tabarani] and the Prophet ﷺ said, "Fasting will intercede for the slave on the Day of Judgment."

Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "No servant (of Allah) fasts on a day for the sake of Allah except that Allah pushes the Hellfire 70 years further away from his face, due to fasting on this day." [Agreed Upon] The same narration with minor differences in wording has been narrated from 6-7 other sahaba.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Whoever fasted the month of Ramadan out of sincere Faith and hoping for a reward from Allah, then all his past sins will be forgiven, and whoever stood for the prayers in the night of Qadr out of sincere Faith and hoping for a reward from Allah, then all his previous sins will be forgiven." [Bukhari]

The Prophet ﷺ said: "There is a gate in Jannah called ar-Rayyan and only those who observed fast shall enter through." [Bukhari] Imam al-Zarkashi رحمه الله said, "Rayyan means to be well-sated with drink, the opposite to thirst; it was named this in compensation for the thirst and hunger endured by those who fasted." [Mirqah al-Mafatih]

This is just the gate and the honour of entering through it into Jannah. What awaits inside is thousands time more. What is it?

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "(Allah said), 'Every good deed of Adam's son is for him except fasting; it is for Me. and I shall Reward (the fasting person) for it.' Verily, the smell of the mouth of a fasting person is better to Allah than the smell of musk." [Bukhari]

Imagine a person goes to a King and asks them for a favour. The King out of his bounty will not only fulfill his request but will add ten times to it because that is what befits his status of being the King. We can only imagine then what Allah has prepared for us when He is the King of all Kings. His Bounty knows no bounds and there are no limits to what Allah can Bless His slave with. With other acts of worship like congregational prayer, we know that a person is rewarded 27 times, or reciting a letter from the Qur'an is rewarded 10 times, etc. We have been told explicitly or at least indirectly of the rewards for the acts of worship that we are commanded to do. Fasting is the only act of worship for which the reward has not been specified. Allah tells us that He will take care of it directly. Our minds cannot fathom and nor can our imaginations run any wilder for what will be waiting for us as a reward from Allah for fasting. May Allah Count us among those whose fasting is accepted.

Also, it is a hidden act of worship free of *riya* and so the rewards are also hidden. Unless a person mentions it himself, no one knows a person is fasting. Imam Ibn al-Jawzi رحمه الله said, "All acts of worship are noticeable (by others) when performed and it is rare for it to be free of some tarnishing, except fasting."

Another benefit of this singling out of fasting will be seen on the Day of Resurrection, as Imam Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah رحمه الله said, "When the Day of Resurrection comes, Allah will bring His slave to account and will settle any scores outstanding from the rest of his deeds, until when there is nothing left but fasting, Allah will settle the matter and will admit him to Paradise by virtue of his fasting."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Fasting and the Qur'an will intercede for the servant on the Day of Resurrection. Fasting will say, "My Lord, I forbade him food and desire so accept my intercession for him". The Qur'an will say, "My Lord, I prevented him from sleep at night, so accept my intercession for him". So their intercession will be accepted." [Ahmad]

Imam Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali رحمه الله said, "Know that a believer combines himself in the month of Ramadan between two jihads (against) his Nafs; Jihad in the day upon fasting and Jihad in the night upon Qiyam (voluntary prayer) so whoever gathers between these two jihads and fulfils (what) is of their rights, will be sufficed with a reward which is without any account (i.e unlimited)." [Lataif al-Ma'arif]



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Fasting is a shield (or a screen or a shelter). So, the person observing fasting should avoid sexual relation with his wife and should not behave foolishly and impudently, and if somebody fights with him or abuses him, he should tell him twice, 'I am fasting.'"

The Prophet (ﷺ) added, "By Him in Whose Hands my soul is, the smell coming out from the mouth of a fasting person is better in the sight of Allah than the smell of musk. (Allah says about the fasting person), 'He has left his food, drink and desires for My sake. The fast is for Me. So I will reward (the fasting person) for it and the reward of good deeds is multiplied ten times.'" [Bukhari]

Imam Ibn Kathir رحمه الله in his Tafseer recorded, "Allah said to Prophet Musa, 'The fragrance of the one who fasts is more loved to Me than roses.'"

Imam Hasan al-Basri رحمه الله said: "A maiden of Jannah will speak to the Wali of Allah ﷺ while he is laying with her on (the shore of) a river of honey in Jannah, while she hands him a glass (of the sweetest drink), and she will ask him, "Do you know what day Allah ﷻ married me to you?"



He saw you (fasting) on a long summers day while you were thirsty in the mid-day heat, and He called the Angels and said: 'Look at My slave, he has left his wife and his desires and his pleasures and his food and his drink for Me due to his longing for what I have prepared for him. Bear witness that I have forgiven him,'...and so He forgave you on that day and married you to me." [Lataif al-Ma'arif] Likewise, there are rewards for women greater than what their hearts could desire or even imagine.

Imam Ibn al-Jawzi رحمه الله said: "O my dear brother, in this month, all faults and mistakes are concealed, all souls and hearts are softened, sins and burdens are forgiven and Allāh ﷻ relieves every sad and troubled one.

He ﷻ says to His angels, "O My Angels, look at those dry tongues, how they become moist with My remembrance. Look at those hard eyes, how they soften and weep out of fear of Me; and look at those delicate feet planted firmly at the stations of prayer out of desire for Me!"

O my dear brother, whenever you give food to others in this month for the sake of Allāh, the Lord of the heavens and the earth, you shall be raised to high ranks in the lofty grounds of paradise, and you will be clothed with complete goodness and stripped of all sin..." [Bustan al-Arifeen]



Imam Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali رحمه الله wrote, "...And from the acts of obedience whose reward is multiplied in the extreme of heat is, fasting, and this is because of the thirst that one experiences in the mid-day heat. This is why Mu'adh b. Jabal رضي الله عنه expressed regret on his deathbed that he would no longer experience this mid-day thirst, as did the other Salaf.

It is narrated about Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه that he would fast in the summer and not fast in the winter, and 'Umar رضي الله عنه advised his son Abdullah on his deathbed: "Try to (obtain) characteristics of faith," and the first one he mentioned was fasting in extreme heat.

It was reported that al-Qasim bin Muhammad رضي الله عنه said that Aishah رضي الله عنها would fast in the intense heat, and he was asked: "What made her do that?" He replied: "She would rush (to take advantage of good deeds) before death." [Lataif al-Ma'arif]

Abu Musa relates, 'Allah decreed upon Himself that whoever goes thirsty for Him on a hot day, that He would grant him water on the Day of Judgement.' [al-Bazzar]

Fasting in summer is a quality of faith because of the length of a summer day and the severity of its heat.



Imam 'Izz al-Din Ibn 'Abd al-Salam رحمه الله said, "As for the opportunity to engage in more acts of worship, this is because it reminds one of the hunger and thirst of the dwellers of the Fire so it urges one to perform more acts of worship in order to attain salvation from the Fire. As for restraining impulses of disobedience and violations, this is because a soul that has had its fill desires and yearns for disobedience whereas if it is hungry and thirsty it desires food and drink. The desire of the soul for deliverance (from hunger and thirst) and being preoccupied with this is better than its yearning for disobedience and sin. This is why some of the salaf preferred fasting to all other acts of worship; when questioned why, they replied, 'For Allah to look upon me whilst my soul is challenging me concerning food and drink is more beloved to me than for Him to look upon me whilst it is challenging me concerning disobedience....'" [Fawa'id al-Sawm]



The Month of Revelation

Our Sheikh, Maqsood ul Hassan Faizi حفظه الله said,
The Suhuf of Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام was revealed
on the 1 Night of Ramadan

The Tawrat of Prophet Musa عليه السلام was revealed on
the 6 Night of Ramadan

The Injeel of Prophet Isa عليه السلام was revealed on the
13 Night of Ramadan

The Zabur of Prophet Daood عليه السلام was revealed
on the 17 Night of Ramadan

The Qur'an of Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم was revealed on the 24 Night of Ramadan [Ramadan Ke Khasaes Wa Fazayel]

Imam Ahmad رحمه الله reported Wathilah bin Al-Asqa` that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said:

أُنْزِلَتْ صُحُفُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ فِي أَوَّلِ لَيْلَةٍ مِنْ رَمَضَانَ، وَأُنْزِلَتِ التَّوْرَةُ لَيْسَتْ مَصْنُوعَةً مِنْ رَمَضَانَ، وَالْإِنْجِيلُ لثَلَاثَ عَشْرَةَ خَلَّتْ مِنْ رَمَضَانَ، وَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ الْقُرْآنَ لِأَرْبَعٍ وَعِشْرِينَ خَلَّتْ مِنْ رَمَضَانَ

The Suhuf (Pages) of Ibrahim were revealed during the first night of Ramadan. The Tawrat was revealed during the sixth night of Ramadan. The Injeel was revealed during the thirteenth night of Ramadan. Allah revealed the Qur'an on the twenty-fourth night of Ramadan.

A person should recite as much as he by night or by day. He should also strive to learn its meanings to connect better with the Word of Allah. To recite it by night is better since that's when Angel Jibreel would teach the Prophet ﷺ the Qur'an. People debate over which is better, merely reading or understanding as well.

Ibn Masud رضي الله عنه said, "This Qur'an is the banquet of Allah, whoever is invited to it is safe."

Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه said, "Reading Surat al-Baqarah at night with contemplation and tarteel (reciting the Qur'an slowly, making each letter clear) is more beloved to me than reading the entire Qur'an with hadr (a fast mode of recitation)."

Imam Ibn Qayyim رحمه الله discusses at length whether it is more virtuous to recite a small portion of the Qur'an with tadabbur (contemplation) or to recite a large amount. He summarises the issue by saying:

"And the correct position in this issue is to say that the reward of recitation with tarteel and contemplation is more excellent and elevated in degree, and the reward of abundant recitation is more numerous. So the first example is like the one who gives a great jewel in charity or frees a slave whose worth is very valuable, and the second example is like the one who gives a large number of dirham in charity or frees a number of slaves of low value. [Zaad al-Ma'ad]

Imam Ibn Katheer رحمه الله recorded from Ibn Ka'b (a Madinan tabi'i known for tafsee) who said, "I would rather spend the entire night reciting surahs al-Zalzalah and al-Qari'ah without reciting anything else but instead repeating them again and again with contemplation than to mangle – or perhaps he said babble – the entire Qur'an." [al-Bidayah w'al-Nihayah]



The safest way forward as mentioned by our teachers is that as long as you are in the company of the Qur'an irrespective of whatever capacity, you are winning.



The Month of Action

Our Sheikh, Ibrahim Nuhu حفظه الله said, "Ramadan is the best school to train yourself. If you can have patience and commit to abstaining from some evil deed in Ramadan for 30 days then for sure you have it in you, the courage and the energy to battle it and leave it completely. Shaitan's whispers of leaving it as it being too difficult will not work on you as you know you can stop.

Fasting in Ramadan was prescribed so that one can attain Taqwa of Allah which is the key to this dunya and the akhira. Taqwa means to put between Allah's Punishment and yourself something which will protect you from it. What is this protection? To follow all that has been taught by the Messenger of Allah and the Book of Allah."

Constant pangs of procrastination and laziness are acting like termites eating away our blessed time in Ramadan. Rather, this is a month of struggle, change, and action followed by success.

In 1 AH, the Prophet ﷺ sent Hamza ibn Abdul Mattalib رضي الله عنه with 30 riders to Saif al-Bahr to investigate 300 riders from Quraish who had camped suspiciously in that area. The Muslims were about to engage the disbelievers, but they were separated by Majdy ibn Umar al-Juhany. The hypocrites of Madinah, hoping to oppose the unity of the Muslims, built their own masjid (called Masjid al-Dirar). The Prophet ﷺ ordered this masjid to be destroyed during Ramadan.

In 3 AH, truth triumphed over falsehood when 313 ill-equipped Muslims defeated a well-equipped Qurayshi army. This was the landmark battle of Badr that occurred in Ramadan.

In 8 AH, the city of Makkah was conquered without a battle, on 20th Ramadan. All idols were destroyed and the holy sanctuary was cleansed of all remnants of shirk in the month of Ramadan.

From The Battle of Qadisiya to Fath Andalus, 92 years after the Hijrah where Tariq ibn Ziyad succeeded in liberating the whole of Spain, Sicily, and part of France, beginning the Golden Age of Al-Andalus where Muslims ruled for over 700 years occurred in Ramadan.



Salahuddin al-Ayyubi, after battling with the Crusaders for years, finally drove them out of Syria and liberated the whole of the occupied lands in the month of Ramadan.

The Mongols were sweeping across Asia destroying everything that lay in their path. Saifuddin Qutb, united the Muslim army and met the Mongols at Ain Jalut on the 25th of Ramadan and with the help of Allah, crushed the Mongol army and reversed this tidal wave of horror they had left in Baghdad.

This is not a month for us to go into slumber mode. Rather we take from this two things:

1. Take pride in the history of our Deen and dependency on Allah. Nearly all these battles were fought where the odds/scenario were against us. If Allah is with us we can overcome any obstacle. Taqwa matters.
2. Allah has blessed this month and the work done in this month for His sake. Allah has laid out success in front of us and we have to step up our game to achieve it. Ihsan matters.

Many of us have read an infamous "hadith" before. If not, we'll be hearing about it in Ramadan often. It reads as, "The first part of the month of Ramadan is mercy, the middle of it is forgiveness and the end of it is freedom from the Fire."



The scholars of hadith have graded this to have problems in the chain of narration and deemed it either weak or fabricated.

Our Sheikh, Ibrahim Nuhu حفظه الله said, "The whole month of Ramadan is a month of mercy, forgiveness, pleasure, righteousness, and salvation from hellfire. EVERY single night Allah grants people salvation from the fire. 30 chances Allah is granting us and yet if we cannot please Allah to grant us forgiveness, then surely we are the losers.

What has passed has passed and the future is unknown. You have nothing but the hour that you are living in that you should make the most out of. Embrace this Ramadan as though this is the last Ramadan that you get to witness. Let's be realistic about our goals. It's just a month of work and a chance to attain success which is never followed by failure by making the most of this month.

Allah will grant you protection, preserve your deeds and safeguard you from evils till the day you meet Him. This is what a righteous slave experiences when he gets closer to Allah.



The Prophet ﷺ told the sahaba to make a move immediately to intercept the caravan. They weren't given any time to prepare and because of this many just went out with sticks. This was the Battle of Badr and only 313 of the sahaba could make it. Some reports say that this battle lasted for just about two hours. In the end, the Prophet ﷺ gave those who had participated the glad tidings of all their sins being forgiven. All the sins are forgiven just for an effort of 2 hours. This is a success that isn't followed by failure. Whenever you get a chance like this to do good, grab on to it for you don't know how much reward and success Allah has placed in it."

It was narrated that Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه said: The Prophet ﷺ ascended the minbar and said: "Ameen, Ameen, Ameen." It was said: 'O Messenger of Allaah, you ascended the minbar and said, 'Ameen, Ameen, Ameen.'" He said: "Jibreel (peace be upon him) came to me and said: 'If Ramadan comes and a person is not forgiven, he will enter Hell and Allaah will cast him far away. Say Ameen.' So I said Ameen. He said: 'O Muhammad, if both or one of a person's parents are alive and he does not honour them and he dies, he will enter Hell and Allah will cast him far away. Say Ameen.' So I said Ameen.



He said: 'If you are mentioned in a person's presence and he does not send blessings upon you and he dies, he will enter Hell and Allah will cast him far away. Say Ameen.' So I said Ameen." [Ibn Hibban]

Imam Qatadah رحمه الله said, "Whoever does not have his sins forgiven in Ramadan, he will not have his sins forgiven in other than Ramadan.." [Lataif al-Ma'arif] This highlights the mindset of the person. If one did not take advantage of an opportunity like the blessed month of Ramadan to rectify his affairs, then it is highly unlikely that he would do so outside of Ramadan."



Where Do We Stand?

This is a test we can do before Ramadan starts and before it ends. Why? It's important that we reflect and gauge what we made of this opportunity.

The worst thing that we can do to ourselves is to think that we have achieved a level of success already and that it is enough for us. It happens at times that we fall into the mirage where our inner ego gets the most of us and arrogance brews like morning coffee.

Allah has given us a scale in just a single ayah using which we can judge where we stand and what is the condition of our hearts.

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ

The believers are only those who, when Allāh is mentioned, their hearts become fearful, and when His verses are recited to them, it increases them in faith; and upon their Lord they rely [Surah Anfal, Ayah 2]

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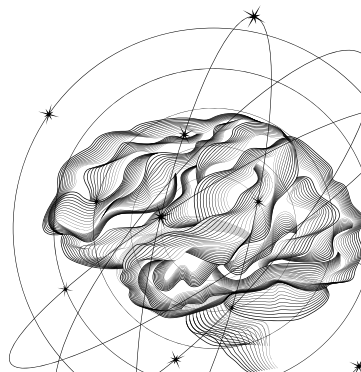
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His verses are recited to them, it
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[Surah Al-Anfal, 2]

We can just reflect on this by pondering over how we feel:

- When Allah's mention is made anytime throughout the day, does our heart gain vigour, excitement, and joy?
- When we stand to listen to the Qur'an being recited in taraweeh, do we feel motivated to be strong in our faith?
- When we complete our suhoor, do we rely upon Allah to sustain us for the next 15-20 hours?

Yes, Ramadan is the month where we recharge, rejuvenate and refresh our souls to take on the coming year till we get to experience another Ramadan with the permission of Allah. But on the other side of the coin, Ramadan is also a scale that helps us gauge what we have become or what our hearts have accumulated over the year. It is a litmus test that tells us the condition that our heart is in at the moment. Let's look at a few practical reflections based on this ayah:



Test for Internal Condition:

Reflect on the story of the three men stuck in the cave during the storm. Each mentioned a deed they had done purely for the sake of Allah and the stone blocking their exit moved. If we were in this condition, would the rock have moved for us?

Narrated Ibn Umar رضي الله عنهم - The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "While three persons were walking, rain began to fall and they had to enter a cave in a mountain. A big rock rolled over and blocked the mouth of the cave. They said to each other, 'Invoke Allah with the best deed you have performed (so Allah might remove the rock)'.

One of them said, 'O Allah! My parents were old and I used to go out for grazing (my animals). On my return, I would milk (the animals) and take the milk in a vessel for my parents to drink. After they had drunk from it, I would give it to my children, family, and wife. One day I was delayed and on my return I found my parents sleeping, and I disliked waking them up. The children were crying at my feet (because of hunger). That state of affairs continued till it was dawn. O Allah! If You regard that I did it for Your sake, then please remove this rock so that we may see the sky.' So, the rock was moved a bit.

The second said, 'O Allah! You know that I was in love with a cousin of mine, like the deepest love a man may have for a woman, and she told me that I would not get my desire fulfilled unless I paid her one-hundred Dinars (gold pieces). So, I struggled for it till I gathered the desired amount, and when I sat in between her legs, she told me to be afraid of Allah, and asked me not to deflower her except rightfully (by marriage). So, I got up and left her. O Allah! If You regard that I did it for Your sake, kindly remove this rock.' So, two-thirds of the rock was removed.

Then the third man said, 'O Allah! No doubt You know that once I employed a worker for one Faraq (three Sa's) of millet, and when I wanted to pay him, he refused to take it, so I sowed it and from its yield, I bought cows and a shepherd. After a time that man came and demanded his money. I said to him: Go to those cows and the shepherd and take them for they are for you. He asked me whether I was joking with him. I told him that I was not joking with him, and all that belonged to him. O Allah! If You regard that I did it sincerely for Your sake, then please remove the rock.' So, the rock was removed completely from the mouth of the cave." [Bukhari]





Test for External Condition:

How are our life, mannerisms, and dealings with people? Would Imam Bukhari رحمه الله take a narration from us?

Imam Bukhari رحمه الله would not even take hadith from someone who tricked his donkey with a carrot. If this is the case with the treatment of animals, then where do we stand with respect to our dealings with the people around us in our families, friend circles, and communities?

Test for Wealth:

The scholars of the past were extremely careful with regard to Halal earnings and the source of their wealth. There was absolutely nothing even remotely doubtful in their sources of income. Would Imam Ahmad رحمه الله eat at our house, had we the honour of inviting him for dinner?

According to narrations, Imam Ahmad's son, Abdullah who was working in a government post, once sent him a gift of bread. When Imam Ahmad received the bread, he decided not to eat it himself. Instead, he took the bread down to the river and threw it in the water.

When his son asked him why he had done this, Imam Ahmad replied, "I did not want to eat it because I fear that it may have been baked with ill-gotten wealth, and I did not want to take anything that was not pure." Imam Ahmad even refused to eat fish from the same river, saying that he feared that they might have been contaminated by the bread.

Of course, other names of Imams could have been placed instead, but hopefully, these can drive the point home better.





The Month of Mercy

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "When the first night of the month of Ramadan comes, the devils and rebellious Jinn are chained up and the gates of Hell are closed, and not one of its gates is opened. The gates of Paradise are opened and not one of its gates is closed. And a caller cries out:

'O seeker of good, proceed (come forth!!); O seeker of evil, desist. And Allāh has those whom He redeems from the Fire, and that happens every night." [Tirmidhi]

Naturally, a few questions come to mind. If the devils are chained, why do we sin in Ramadan? Is this a literal confinement? Does this apply to all of the Shayateen?

The teacher of our teachers, Sheikh Ibn al-Uthaymeen رحمه الله said, "The Prophet (ﷺ) clarified what was meant by this when he said: "Thus, they do not get away with what they would usually get away with previously (before Ramadan)," meaning, they are unable to misguide in the way that they would misguide previously.

Therefore, they are not fully shackled in the sense that they are unable to tempt someone; rather, they tempt, but it is not like how they would tempt outside of Ramadan, based upon his (ﷺ) statement: "Thus, they do not get away with what they would usually get away with previously (before Ramadan)."

This is from one perspective. From another perspective, there has come in some ahadith the expression: "The marada shayaṭeen are shackled," meaning, the strongest in their demonisation is shackled. Therefore, based upon this, other than them ([i.e. the strongest of the shayaṭeen]) are capable of tempting people.

Some people say: How is it that the shayaṭeen are shackled, yet still we witness some people increase in their evil during Ramadan. We say: Other than the rebellious (i.e. other than the strongest of the shayaṭeen) have overpowered them, or it is said: If it wasn't for Ramadan, the temptations would have been worse. This interpretation is closest to reality since the people of goodness possess a desire to do better and to distance themselves from evil; whereas, the people of evil may increase in their evil during Ramadan. [Jalasat Ramadaniyyah]



What we need to remember, and bring a change in our mindset is that Shaitan by default has no power or authority over us to make us actually commit sin throughout the year either. Plus with the coming of Ramadan, our beloved Prophet has told us that the major shayateen will be chained up in this month.

Allah tells us in Surah Ibrahim,

وَقَالَ الشَّيْطَانُ لَمَّا قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعَدَ الْحَقُّ
وَوَعَدْتُكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُكُمْ وَمَا كَانَ لِي عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا أَن
دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاسْتَجَبْتُمْ لِي فَلَا تَلُومُونِي وَلُومُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ مَا أَنَا
بِمُصْرِخِكُمْ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُصْرِخِيَّ إِنِّي كَفَرْتُ بِمَا أَشْرَكْتُمُونِ مِن
قَبْلُ إِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

“And Shaitan will say when the matter has been concluded, “Indeed, Allah had promised you the promise of truth. And I promised you, but I betrayed you. But I had no authority over you except that I invited you, and you responded to me. So do not blame me, but blame yourselves. I cannot be called to your aid, nor can you be called to my aid. Indeed, I deny your association of me [with Allah] before. Indeed, for the wrongdoers is a painful punishment.” [Surah Ibrahim, Ayah 22]



and in Surah al-Hijr:

إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ
الْغَاوِينَ

“Indeed, My servants – no authority will you have over them, except those who follow you of the deviant.” [Surah al-Hijr, 42]

We give Shaitan access by indulging in sins and letting our guards down. Allah gives us the opportunity to power up our defenses in Ramadan by chaining the major/extreme Shayateen.

It’s during Ramadan that we come to the conclusion that we can’t just commit a sin and keep blaming it on Shaitan. There is a fault and that fault is ours. Blaming things on others is just an easy way out and we are not holding ourselves accountable. With that train of thought, we are fooling no one but ourselves.

Lee J. Colan & Julie Davis-Colan in their book ‘Stick With It: Mastering the Art of Adherence’ said, “You can be the best and have all the advantages, but to win, you must execute consistently. Plain and simple. It is not necessarily easy, but it is certainly simple. The real secret is not in knowing the formula, but in executing it.



That is where our challenge seems to lie - in applying what we already know. It's not that our intentions are bad; quite the contrary. And it's not that we we don't know how to tackle our resolutions. The problem is that most of us don't stick with it long enough to permanently change our behaviour and get the results we want. It takes at least 21 days of repeated action for a new behaviour to become a habit. There is a knowing-doing gap - we know what to do, but fail to do it consistently."

If our sins are many then it takes much more hard work to get the best out of Ramadan. For some, it is really easy and full of blessings whilst for others it is extremely difficult and a huge struggle. For some, we see that they are standing in taraweeh for 20 raka'at and even the eight of qiyam later in the night and so much more, whereas for some even holding on to the five obligatory salahs in the masjid is a humongous struggle on its own. (Here we don't include those with physical, mental or other family/work-related issues which don't allow them to make the most of the month. Our focus is just reflecting on the sins and what impact they have on our Ramadan.)



But if we have been doing something for the whole year, the other 11 months, then even if we do stop ourselves from committing those bad actions, its effects and side effects will remain with us.

It is because of this that we see that the Prophet ﷺ, his companions, and the righteous after them used to start preparing in Sha'ban itself. They used to increase in their involuntary actions, recitation of the Quran, and increase their days of fasting so that they are ready to welcome and make the most of Ramadan. Our mother Aishah رضي الله عنها said: "The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) did not fast in any month of the year more than he did in Sha'ban. He used to fast all of Sha'ban." [Nasai]

It is like preparing for a marathon. If you haven't warmed up properly, then within a short distance itself you'll feel out of breath and cramps coming up and whatnot. Forget finishing the marathon, you might end up injuring yourself if you continue to persist in the same condition.

A misconception based on the earlier hadith that many people have is that whoever dies during Ramadan will enter Paradise without any reckoning or judgement. This is incorrect.

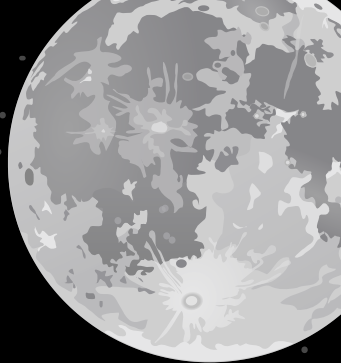


What this means that the gates of paradise are opened as a form of encouragement for those who are doing good deeds to make it easy for them to enter into Paradise.

Likewise, the gates of Hell are closed for the believers in order to abstain from sins, so that they will not approach these gates. It does not mean that whoever dies in Ramadan will enter Paradise without reckoning.

The only ones who will enter Paradise without reckoning are those who execute what is binding upon them from righteous actions and possess the characteristics that the Messenger (ﷺ) has described them with when he said: "They are those who do not request ruqya (performed on them), cauterisation, nor do they rely on omens, but rather, they rely upon their Lord."





إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ
سُلْطَانٌ إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ

“Indeed, My servants – no authority will you have over them, except those who follow you of the deviant.”

[Surah al-Hijr, 42]



The Core: Our Heart

Why do we keep making mention of the heart again and again? Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrated that: the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“Verily, when the slave (of Allah) commits a sin, a black spot appears on his heart. When he refrains from it, seeks forgiveness and repents, his heart is polished clean. But if he returns, it increases until it covers his entire heart. And that is the رَانَ which Allah mentioned: ‘Nay, but on their hearts is the رَانَ which they used to earn.’” [Tirmidhi]

In another famous hadith, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said,

“What is lawful is clear and what is unlawful is clear, but between them are certain doubtful things which many people do not know. So he who guards against doubtful things keeps his religion and his honour blameless. But he who falls into doubtful things falls into that which is unlawful, just as a shepherd who grazes his cattle in the vicinity of a pasture declared prohibited (by the king); he is likely to stray into the pasture.

Mind you, every king has a protected pasture and Allah's involved limit is that which He has Declared unlawful. Verily, there is a piece of flesh in the body, if it is healthy, the whole body is healthy, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Verily, it is the heart." [Bukhari and Muslim].

Our answers to the questions posed by that ayah of Surah al-Ma'idah above give us an idea of just what is the state of our heart and how many black spots may be there on it.

Imam Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله said: "It is sufficient for the sinner as a punishment that the veneration and awe of Allah جل جلاله is removed from his heart." [Ad-Daa' wad-Dawaa']

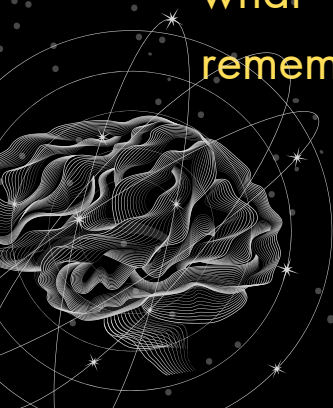
Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud رضي الله عنه said: "A person may forget the knowledge he has due to a sin he commits."

Allah tells us in the Qur'an,

فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِمْ مِيثَاقَهُمْ لَعَنَّاهُمْ
وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَاسِيَةً يُحَرِّفُونَ
الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ وَنَسُوا حَظًّا
مِمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ

"But they broke their pledge,
so We distanced them [from
Us] and hardened their
hearts. They distort the
meaning of [revealed] words
and have forgotten some of
what they were told to
remember"

[Surah al-Ma'idah, 13]





What Is The Sin?

We all know what sin is as defined by the Shariah. The hadith of the Prophet ﷺ above already clarifies it in detail. The Prophet ﷺ has given us another filter to gauge what we do.

Wabisah bin Ma'bad رضي الله عنه said: I came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and he said, "You have come to ask about righteousness." I said, "Yes." He ﷺ said, "Consult your heart. Righteousness is that about which the soul feels at ease and the heart feels tranquil. And wrongdoing is that which wavers in the soul and causes uneasiness in the breast, even though people have repeatedly given their legal opinion (in its favour)." [Ahmad]

The Way Back

Sheikh Abdul Bary Yahya حفظه الله advised, "If you know you're sinning, change. Allah will give you a chance to switch but if you keep persisting in your sin then a time might come when Allah himself might seal your heart and misguide you. You will know it's wrong and harmful but you'll still do it.

If you have patience and taqwa in Allah, help from Allah is always on the way. But that is the condition for the help to come. Allah will test and it'll be such that no relief can be found anywhere. If the person at this point is patient, submits to Allah, and has taqwa of Allah then Allah will open doors people didn't even know existed.

The archers in Uhud disobeyed the Prophet ﷺ and went down to get the Dunya. That is when you lose or rather destroy your success. They wanted something so they interpreted the Prophet's words to mean what they want. When people desire something they try to find the words of the Prophet ﷺ to twist and satisfy their desires."

Allah tells us in the Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ
وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ
الْفَاسِقُونَ

O you who have believed, fear Allah. And let every soul look to what it has put forth for tomorrow – and fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do. And be not like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves. Those are defiantly disobedient. [Surah al-Hashr, 18-19]



Umar Ibn al-Khattab رضي الله عنه said, "Call yourselves to account before you are called to account, and weigh yourselves before you are weighed, as calling yourselves to account today will make it easier for you when you are called to account tomorrow, and be adorned for the great appearance: that Day shall you be brought to Judgment, and not a secret of you will be hidden."

When we acknowledge our mistakes and our shortcomings then we have already started on the path to good. The very fact that we know that we have some errors, is something that will constantly push us and keep us motivated to do good.

As Allah tells us in the Qur'an,

لَهُ مُعَقِّبَاتٌ مِّنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ يَحْفَظُونَهُ، مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ ۖ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ
 اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُونِهِ مِنِّ وَالِي

"For each one are successive [angels] before and behind him who protect him by the decree of Allah. Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves. And when Allah intends for a people ill, there is no repelling it. And there is not for them besides Him any patron." [Surah al-Ra'd, 11]



Imam Ibn al-Jawzi رحمه الله said: "If you find a darkness in your heart after you have sinned, then know that in your heart there is light, because of that light you felt darkness." [Rawdat al-Muhibbin]

All this was not to make us lose hope about the blessings of the month of Ramadan. This month indeed is a chance from Allah to help and purify us. This was hopefully a reality check to measure where we stand and to realize just how much more effort we need to exert from our side to not miss out on the remaining few days of this blessed month.

Let's start working on reducing and working on our sins today, actually NOW in this month of Ramadan. Don't look at others, let's look and work on ourselves because, in reality, that's what matters.



How Do We Know Our Repentance Has Been Accepted?

Our Sheikh, Ibrahim Nuhu حفظه الله elaborates on this and said that Allah has told His Prophet ﷺ about this already.

Our job is to sincerely repent to Allah for our sins and Allah has promised that He will accept and forgive us for that sin. Instead of letting it weigh us down, once we have repented we go about our lives.

Thinking about acceptance is not our job, rather it will disturb you a lot. It will hinder your progress and you won't make a move. You'll just be thinking maybe-maybe not and be stuck there. Some people will commit a sin and keep thinking about it so much so that they don't do anything else.

A smart person is one who uses his past as a means of reflection to make a decision in the present that will make him successful in the future. Don't dwell on the past for you cannot relive it again and fix it. Repent and say:



رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَتُبْ عَلَيَّ إِنَّكَ
أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

"My Rabb! Forgive me
and pardon me. Indeed,
You are the Oft-Returning
with compassion and
Ever-Merciful."

[Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi]



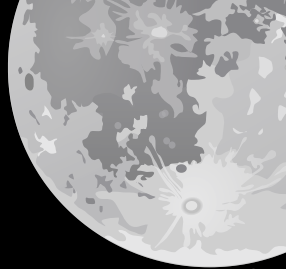
The Prophet ﷺ said: "Allah, Blessed and Exalted is He, says, 'O son of Adam, as long as you call on Me, I shall forgive you of what you have done, and think nothing of it. O son of Adam, even if your sins were to reach up to the clouds in the sky, and then you were to ask for My forgiveness, I would forgive you and think nothing of it. O son of Adam, even if you were to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth, and then you were to meet Me after death, not worshipping anything besides Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as the earth.'" [Tirmidhi]

Repent the way the Prophet ﷺ taught us and be satisfied. InshaAllah, you will be on the safe side.



“ ‘O son of Adam, as long as you call on Me, I shall forgive you of what you have done, and think nothing of it.”

[Tirmidhi]



Fiqh of Fasting

Pillars and Conditions

What's the difference between a pillar (rukn) and a condition (shart)?

A pillar is part of or inside the action that is being spoken about. If a pillar is missing, the entire deed will collapse and the action will have to be repeated. Conditions are actions that need to be done prior to the act of worship. If these conditions are missed then it invalidates the act of worship.

The Pillars of Fasting are:

1. Intention
2. Refraining from the Invalidators of Fasting

Allah says,

فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ

But whoever of you is ill or on a journey, then let them fast an equal number of days after Ramadan.

[Surah al-Baqarah, 184]

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "The pen has been lifted from three; for the sleeping person until he awakens, for the boy until he becomes a young man, and for the mentally insane until he regains sanity." [Tirmidhi]

Fasting is obligatory on a person who meets 5 Conditions:

1. Being a Muslim
2. Being Accountable (Mukallaf): Being sane and having reached the age of puberty
3. Have the ability to fast
4. Not a Traveller
5. Nothing that prevents from Fasting

In addition, women must not be undergoing menstruation or post-partum bleeding.

A person is deemed to have reached adulthood when any of the following occurs:

1. Emission of semen
2. Growth of coarse pubic hair
3. Hitting 15 years of age
4. In the case of females, there is menstruation. If a woman starts her period, she is obliged to fast even if she has not yet reached the age of ten.

If a person becomes a Muslim, a child hits puberty, or an insane person regains their sanity during the daytime of Ramadan then they can avoid eating or drinking out of respect for the day of Ramadan, but they cannot just start fasting from that point in time.



Why? They had no intention to fast in the first place and an action cannot be done without a valid intention. But because of their case, they do not have to make up for this day as things were not in their hands. This is the established position from Imams al-Layth, and al-Thawri, the position of the Madhab of Imam al-Shafi'i, and a narration from Imam Ahmad.

For the days that they have missed, then they do not need to make them up or pay any expiation for it. As for the upcoming days, they have to fast it to completion like a normal person.

If a child reaches the age of discernment (around seven years of age) but not the age of puberty, then he should be encouraged to fast.

It is reported that the Sahaba used to make their children fast while they were young, take them to the masjid, and have for them a toy made of wool, and if the child would cry from hunger, then they would give the child the toy to play with. The child will be rewarded for their fasting, and the parents will be rewarded for their tarbiyah InshaAllah.



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "A woman is not to fast (even) for one day while her husband is present except with his permission" [Agreed Upon] Imam Abu Dawud's version states, "unless it is during Ramadan (then she does not need his permission as it is obligatory fasting)."

Those that are exempted from fasting are:

1. The elderly person who cannot fast
2. The sick person
3. The traveller
4. The women who are menstruating or undergoing post-natal bleeding
5. The women who are pregnant or breastfeeding
6. The one who loses their sanity



Intentions

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Actions are but by intentions, and everyone shall have but that which he intended..." [Bukhari]

Al-Niyyat is the plural of niyyah. The word Niyyah is often translated as an "intention." Other translations include purpose, goal, aim, resolve, resolution etc. Some scholars translate it as "consciousness of purpose." This second translation truly depicts its reality. Scholars technically define it as a determination or an aspiration to do something.

Imam Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah رحمه الله defined intention as the knowledge of a doer of what he is doing and what is the purpose behind this action. He stated that the intelligent, voluntary actor does not do anything without first conceiving it and wanting it. This is the reality of intention.

Any action that is done needs to have an intention behind it for it to be valid and accepted. Without the proper intention, no matter how mighty the action, its value can be turned to dust. With the proper intention, the smallest of deeds can be turned into mountains.



Intentions are just as important as the deed itself, if not more so. A deed with a good intention is like a secret between you and Allah. It is something that you can look forward to when you finally meet Him because only He knows the work you did in your heart to make sure the intention was strong. This is a perfect fit for the act of fasting as it is a hidden act of worship that cannot be shown off to others unless the person himself exposes it to the people.

The key here is to have Ikhlas. The word ikhlas linguistically means 'to purify' or 'to filter.' The technical meaning of Ikhlas as it is used in the Shariah is: "To purify one's intentions so that the actions which stem from them are purely for the sake of Allah."

For a deed to be acceptable, it should have the correct intention and be done in the correct manner. It needs to be in accordance with the legislation of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger ﷺ. We need to worship and please Allah based on what He Wants. How do we know what Allah likes and dislikes? Through the Sunnah. If someone claims something to be good, it needs to have a basis in either the Qur'an or the Sunnah. You cannot pray five raka'at for Dhuhr intending it to be something good.



Intention in The Heart vs Intention Upon The Tongue

Imam Ibn Qudamah رحمه الله said: "The meaning of intention is to resolve to do something, i.e. to have the resolution in the heart to do something, and to be determined to do it without hesitation."

Imam As-Suyuti رحمه الله said: "It is Bid'ah to articulate the Niyyah for Salat, it is not of the Prophet's ﷺ Sunnah nor was it the way of his Sahaba (رضي الله عنه). They used to recite Takbir only (at the beginning of Salat)."

According to Sheikhul Islam Ibn Taimiyyah رحمه الله, scholars agree that the "place of the niyyah" is the heart and not the tongue. That is because it has never been reported that Prophet ﷺ or his companions would say, 'I intend to fast', 'I intend to pray' or other than that. Therefore, uttering it (i.e. the intention) is an innovation and newly invented affair.



Intention for Fasting

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Whoever does not intend to fast before dawn, his fasting will not be accepted." [Tirmidhi]

According to another narration, "Whoever does not intend to fast from the night before, there is no fast for him." [Nasai]

As we have established, the place for the intention is in the heart and it is not to be verbalized. We should resolve in our hearts that we are going to fast tomorrow. We should not be saying out loud phrases like, "I intend to fast", "I will fast tomorrow" or other phrases that have been innovated by some people.

As for the time of making this intention, Sheikh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said, "If it crosses a person's mind that he is going to fast tomorrow, then he has made the intention." [al-Ikhtiyarat] The intention to be fast is to be made the night before. This is the safest opinion InshaAllah.

Some scholars also opine that in the case of a repeated act of worship, it is sufficient to form the intention once the first time one does, unless the sequence of repetition is interrupted, in which case a new intention must be formed.



On this basis, if a person has the intention of fasting on the first day of Ramadan that he will fast this whole month, that is enough to cover the whole month, so long as he does not have an excuse to break his fast and thus break this continuity, such as traveling during Ramadan. In that case, when he wants to resume fasting he must form the intention of fasting again. It is safest and best to have an intention to fast every night before dawn.

Ka'b bin Malik رضي الله عنه said, "Whoever fasts Ramadan, whilst telling himself that once Ramadan leaves he will disobey his Lord, such a persons fast is rejected." [Lataif al-Ma'arif]



The Beginning of Ramadan

It is obligatory for every mukallaf, able person, to fast during the month of Ramadan. It is obligatory upon such people to fast upon seeing the crescent moon or the completion of 30 days of Sha'ban if the moon is not sighted.

Allah says,

فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ

“So whoever of you sights (the crescent on the first night of) the month (of Ramadan), he must observe Sawm (fasts) that month” [Surah al-Baqarah, 185]

Talhah bin Ubaidullah رضي الله عنه reported: At the sight of the new moon (of the lunar month), the Prophet (ﷺ) used to supplicate:

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُمَّ أَهْلُهُ عَلَيْنَا بِالْأَمْنِ وَالْإِيمَانِ، وَالسَّلَامَةِ
وَالْإِسْلَامِ وَالتَّوْفِيقِ لِمَا تُحِبُّ رَبَّنَا وَتَرْضَى، رَبَّنَا وَرَبُّكَ
اللَّهُ

Allah is the Most Great. O Allah, bring us the new moon with security and Faith, with peace and in Islam, and in harmony with what our Lord loves and what pleases Him. (O Moon) Our Lord and your Lord is Allah. [Tirmidhi].

Narrated Ibn Umar رضي الله عنهم: I heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) saying, "When you see the crescent (of the month of Ramadan), start fasting, and when you see the crescent (of the month of Shawwal), stop fasting, and if the sky is overcast (and you can't see it) then regard the month of Ramadan as of 30 days." [Bukhari]

Based on this, we learn that sighting of the moon is a communal obligation (fardh kifayah) or at least mustahab as is the position of the Hanabila. Why do the scholars say this? Sighting the new moon of Ramadan, Shawwal and Dhu'l Hijjah is a communal obligation, because it is connected to two of the pillars of Islam: Fasting and Hajj.

Imam Ibn Hajar رحمه الله wrote, "They (the salaf) should strive to count its (Sha'ban) days accurately, and that is by means of watching the waxing and waning of the moon so that they will be certain of when to expect the new moon of Ramadan and will not miss any of it. [Tuhfat al-Ahwadhi]



Global Sighting vs Local Sighting of The Moon

The scholars differed with regard to the question of whether, if the moon is sighted in one place, all the Muslims around the world are obliged to fast, or are only the nearby countries obliged to fast and not the distant countries. The difference of opinion lies in if the Prophet ﷺ with his wordings was addressing the entire Muslims Ummah or just the People of Madinah.

The first group opined that the Prophet ﷺ was referring to the entire Ummah - According to the primary (mu'tamad) position of the Hanabila, if a sighting of the moon occurs validly by a single upright Muslim be it male or female then it becomes obligatory across and upon all Muslims to fast. Even if a trustworthy and upright person across the other side of the world spots the moon it becomes wajib for everyone else to fast. This is known as the global sighting method.

People have never really acted upon this opinion across time even under Muslim rule as they usually go according to their country etc.



There has not been a single period during which the entire ummah was united upon one moon sighting. Also, it wasn't easy to get the message across to everyone, and even if was, it wouldn't make sense.

Practically, it is not possible to expect all the Muslims to start fasting at the same time, because this would mean that some of them were starting to fast before the new moon had been sighted and even before it had appeared in their lands. This would go against what the Prophet ﷺ said: "Fast when you see it and stop fasting when you see it." [Agreed Upon].

By countries, what is meant is geographical land masses and not the countries that we know of today that are divided by imaginary borders. Lands can be classified into three types:

- Lands that are very far from each other. Imam al-Nawawi and Imam Ibn Abdil Barr etc state that the sighting of the moon in one land is not taken into consideration for the other. Ex: Baghdad and Cordoba.



- Lands that are close to each other, such that they take the same ruling. Imam al-Nawawi etc state that the sighting of the moon in one land is enough for the other. Ex: Makkah and Bahrain.
- Lands that are close but still a considerable distance separate them. Scholars differ here. The sighting of the moon in one land is enough for the other. Ex: Jeddah and Sudan.

Nowadays, it's problematic as some people have started to pick and choose as to which country to follow. In reality, if the moon has been sighted and it's a valid sighting then every Muslim should fast. If there is doubt or conflict, just follow the larger community where you live.

If the person follows the sighting in Saudi Arabia for example, then that is also good. But if a person wants to stick to when his congregation begins fasting then that is preferred as being with the congregation is more important than fasting alone.



Why? Every person who is established in a land, then he fasts along with the people in that land when they fast. This is known as the local or regional or local sighting. Also, a person should follow the Imam or leader of the land and what they decide and not break away from the people and become a source of fitnah and bickering at the onset of the blessed month of Ramadan.

The Prophet ﷺ said: "The fast is the day when you fast, breaking the fast is the day when you break the fast, and sacrifice is the day when you offer the sacrifice." [Abu Dawud]

If we accept the differences in sighting with regard to daily timings, salah timings, etc then we should also accept it with regard to the beginning and end of the month.

It is narrated from Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه that when Kurayb told him that the people of Syria had started fasting on a Friday, Ibn Abbas said, "We saw it on Saturday, and we will carry on fasting until we see the new moon or we complete thirty days." It is clear that he did not follow the sighting of the people of Syria because Syria is far away from Madinah and there may be a difference in moonsighting between the two. This was a matter that was subject to ijtiḥad.



To summarize, at the end of the day, this is a type of difference that is acceptable as there are major scholars on both sides with strong proofs and usool to back their conclusions. This is, where the one who makes ijtiḥad and gets it right will have two rewards, one for his ijtiḥad and the other for getting it right, and the one who gets it wrong will be rewarded for his ijtiḥad. It is safest and best for a person to stick to the decision that is being followed by the majority of the community and stick with the congregation instead of doing his own thing.

As for astronomical calculations, then as per the Hanabilah and other scholars, such a method is invalid.

Likewise, contemporary scholars have also stated that "They have decided unanimously that astronomical calculations carry no weight in determining the new moon with regard to Islamic matters, because the Prophet ﷺ said, "Fast when you see it and stop fasting when you see it." And he ﷺ said: "Do not fast until you see it, and do not stop fasting until you see it." [Fatawa al-Lajnah al-Da'imah]

Why is the fatwa so strict, some might ask? The basic principle with regard to sighting the crescent is that it should be done with the naked eye and to remain true to the Sunnah.



That being said, if the crescent is sighted with the usage of equipment like telescopes etc, then this sighting may be acted upon as these tools are merely used to enhance the vision of the eyes. Allah Knows Best.



Why Are Witnesses Needed?

• Sighting of The Moon

One of the methods of knowing that a month has started or ended is by the sighting of the moon. The main point to be highlighted here is the sighting of the moon and not the existence of the moon itself - meaning - at times the crescent is there but cannot be seen because of clouds or dust storms etc. The beginning of Ramadan is hence based on the actual sighting of the moon.

When it comes to witnesses, for every month, it is necessary for two upright Muslims to sight the moon. Ramadan was made the only exception because Ramadan is a month that requires us to fast, it's an important month, hence as per the Hanabila we take extra caution for the sake of the sanctity of the month. Just one person is enough to mark the beginning of Ramadan.

Narrated Abdullah Ibn Abbas رضى الله عنه - A bedouin came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said, "I have sighted the moon." Al-Hasan added in his version: that is, of Ramadan. He asked, "Do you testify that there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah?" He replied, "Yes". He again asked, "Do you testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "Yes". and he testified that he had sighted the moon. He رضى الله عنه said, "Bilal, announce to the people that they must fast tomorrow." [Abu Dawud]

• **Completion of 30 Days of Sha'ban**

The second way of knowing that Ramadan has entered is the completion of the month of Sha'ban. Every month of the Hijri calendar is either 29 or 30 days. It cannot be 28 or 31 days. If we don't see the moon even after the 29 of Sha'ban, we add another day and then start fasting from after that.

What if the moon was seen around Asr? Any sighting of the moon before Maghrib is not given any consideration.

• **The Day of Doubt**

The third way of knowing that Ramadan has entered, and this is a position held only by the Hanabila (mufradat) is that if there is something preventing the sighting of the moon on the night of the 30th of Sha'ban. The Night of the 30th of Sha'ban means the evening of the 29th. The night is mentioned first. The next day could be the last day of Sha'ban or the first day of Ramadan which is why it's called Yawm al-Shak (The Day of Doubt). Clouds or mountains could prevent us from viewing the moon; then fasting in such a case is not obligatory and we complete the month of Sha'ban. The Hanabila say that this day has to be fasted. It is disliked to fast the Day of Doubt if there are no clouds, dust or mountains, etc hindering the sighting.



Abdullah Ibn Umar رضي الله عنهم used to fast on such days just to be on the safe side and out of precaution of missing out on such a great act of worship. Although the hadith says complete 30 days, the Hanabila say that it holds only when the sighting of the moon is applicable. When it's not possible then we go by the action of Abdullah Ibn Umar for he is the very person who narrated this hadith to us. The person who is narrating the hadith is fully aware of the context of the hadith. His understanding is given priority, and this is a principle of Usul.

If for some reason it was possible to spot the moon during the day then the following day is taken to be the first day of Ramadan.

Allah said,

فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ

So whoever of you sights (the crescent on the first night of) the month (of Ramadan, i.e., is present at his home), he must observe Sawm (fasting) that month.



فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ
فَلْيَصُمْهُ

"So whoever of you sights (the crescent on the first night of) the month (of Ramadan, i.e., is present at his home), he must observe Sawm (fasting) that month."

[Surah al-Baqarah, 185]



If the crescent is not seen clearly under a clear sky on the 30th night of Sha'ban just before Maghrib then one does not fast. It is generally a 3-5 minute window where the crescent can be sighted. However, if the place of rising of the crescent is obscured, then it is obligated to fast as a precautionary ruling with the intention of the next day being Ramadan. This opinion is from the mufradat (unique opinions) of the Hanabila. This opinion was also held by Umar Ibn al-Khattab, Aisha, Asma, Abdullah Ibn Umar, Amr Ibn al-Aas, Abu Hurairah, Anas, and Muawiyah رضي الله عنهم among others. Why?

Narrated Ibn Umar رضي الله عنهم - I heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) saying, "When you see the crescent (of the month of Ramadan), start fasting, and when you see the crescent (of the month of Shawwal), stop fasting; and if the sky is overcast (and you can't see it) then regard the month of Ramadan as of 30 days." [Bukhari]

There is a difference of opinion based on the word 'فَاقْدُرُوا' in the hadith.

This word is explained in Surah al-Fajr when Allah says,

وَأَمَّا إِذَا مَا ابْتَلَاهُ فَقَدَرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقَهُ فَيَقُولُ رَبِّي أَهَانَنِ

But when He tries him and restricts his provision, he says, "My Lord has humiliated me."



Based on this we restrict the month to 29 days and fast as a precaution. Abdullah Ibn Umar used to fast a day before if the horizon was obscured.

Fasting can be commenced by the witness of just 1 person even if that person is a slave. So, to end Ramadan we need two witnesses, but to begin Ramadan just the testimony of one person will suffice. Generally, any other month requires two witnesses.

If the fasting commenced because of the testimony of one witness alone or because of an obscured horizon; and now 30 days have been completed, then we treat the starting day as a false start and that fast is considered a voluntary fast. If a person finds out in the day that Ramadan has begun, then he fasts the remainder of the day and makes that day up later.



Suhoor

It is the meal eaten prior to commencing one's fast. This word is taken from the Arabic word وقت السحر which means the time before dawn. The plural for this word is الاسحار. It's root word also indicates magic but what it really means is hidden and concealment. It is a meal that is eaten in the depths of the night and hidden from the eyes of the people.

As-Suhoor (السُّحُور) is pronounced with dhamma which is a name of the verb (i.e., the action) of eating. Sahoor (سَحُور) with fatha is the name of that which one makes suhur with (i.e., the meal). Likewise, Wadhu (وَضُوء) is a name of the water being used, and Wudhu (وُضُوء) is the name of the action.

Upon the authority of Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه who said, "Dates are a blessed form of sahoor for the believer." [Abu Dawud]

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Indeed Allah sends His salah (blessings and mercy) and His angels send salah (ask Allah for them to be blessed) upon those who take the suhoor meal." [Ibn Hibban]

In another similar narration, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "Eating at the time of sahoor is blessed so do not leave it, even if one of you were to take a sip of water. Indeed Allah sends praise and His angels make dua for those who eat at the time of sahoor. [Ahmad]

One can only imagine the rewards of fasting if just the act of preparing for it in the form of taking suhoor has Allah and His angels send salah upon them.

From Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه who said, "Umar ibn al-Khattab sent me an invitation to eat at the time of sahoor and he said: that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) called it a blessed meal." [Tabarani]

Anas bin Malik رضي الله عنه narrated that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said, "Eat at the time of sahoor, since indeed in eating at the time of Sahoor is a blessing." [Bukhari]

With regard to sahoor, there is no specific dua to be recited at the time. One can say 'Bismillah' at the beginning and to praise Allah when one stops eating, as should be done at every meal. A person is to make the intention in the heart to fast the next day before the time ends. The very act of eating sahoor is a form of intention as well.



Imam Ibn Qudamah al-Maqdisi رحمه الله said, "From the mannerisms of fasting is not to fill oneself up with food at night, rather he eats proportionately. For indeed, the son of Adam does not fill a vessel worse than his stomach.

Whenever he eats to his full at the beginning of the night (Iftar time) he will not benefit from the remainder of the night. Similarly, if he eats to his full in the pre-dawn meal (suhoor) he will not benefit (with himself in terms of worship) till close to Dhuhhr time. That is due to plentiful eating causing laziness and lethargy and then he misses the point of fasting since the point is that he tastes hunger itself and is able to leave that which he desires (from plentiful food)." [Mukhtasar Minhaj al-Qasidin]

At the beginning, we defined fasting as - an act of worship done for the sake of Allah where one is refraining from food, drink, sexual desires and the rest of the matters which nullify a fast, from the time when the second Fajr appears until sunset for the worship of Allah.



What is the second Fajr mentioned in this narration?

Jabir narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said in distinguishing between the two: "Fajr is two: Fajr, which is called dhanab as-sarhaan (wolf tail); it is the false one, which goes vertically, and not horizontally. The other (i.e. true Fajr) goes horizontally but not vertically" [Hakim]

From this we learn that there are two Fajrs: the true time of Fajr and the false Fajr.

- True Fajr is horizontal light, which extends from North to South. Whilst false Fajr is vertical and it extends from East to West.
- The light of true Fajr increases gradually until the sun rises. Unlike false Fajr where the light stays for a short period and then darkness covers the sky again.
- True Fajr light is connected with the entire horizon unlike the false Fajr is disconnected from the horizon by darkness.
- The false Fajr normally appears 45 minutes to an hour before the true Fajr. At the onset of the false dawn or false Fajr (al-fajr al-kadhūb), the fast does not begin, food and drinks are not prohibited nor is sexual relations with one's wife, and it is not the time for Fajr prayer.



Abdullah ibn Umar رضي الله عنهم reported: I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ as saying, "Bilal announces adhan during the night, so you eat and drink, till you hear the Adhan of Ibn Umm Maktum." [Muslim]



From this we learn that there were two adhans that were called. One was the adhan of Fajr that was made by Bilal and the other was an adhan of warning or announcing to the people of the end time of suhoor by Ibn Umm Makhtum. His adhan was at the break of dawn.

Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "If one of you hears the call (to prayer) and the vessel is still in his hand, let him not put it down until he finished with it." [Ahmad]



So this raises the question: When exactly does one stop eating the suhoor as nowadays we have only one adhan and that is that of Fajr. Firstly, there are people who have a very heavy dinner and skip suhoor. This is wrong and against the Sunnah. There is barakah in taking suhoor even if it is just a few dates and water. There are some people who stop an hour before Fajr citing being on the safe side.

Even though their intention might sound good, the action is incorrect and goes completely against the established Sunnah. Suhoor is meant to be delayed till the very end and the max that a person can stop before the adhan is approximately 10 minutes or similar which is enough to recite 50 ayat of the Qur'an. Why?

Zaid bin Thabit رضي الله عنه said, "We took the Suhur with the Prophet ﷺ. Then he stood for the prayer." I asked, "What was the interval between the Suhoor and the Adhan?" He replied, "The interval was sufficient to recite fifty verses of the Qur'an." [Bukhari]

Abu ad-Darda رضي الله عنه said, "From the manners of Prophets is to rush to break the fast and delay the taking of Suhoor" [Ibn Abi Shaybah]



Amr Ibnil 'Aas رضي الله عنه said, "The difference between our fast and the fast of the People of the Book is eating at the time of Suhoor." [Muslim]

Moving to the time when one must stop eating. Allah says,

وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ

And eat and drink until the white thread of dawn becomes distinct to you from the black thread (of night) [Surah al-Baqarah, 187]

From this ayah, we learn that the fasting person is allowed to eat and drink until the true time of dawn or true Fajr. What is meant here with the time of dawn is that through which the start of the day can be recognized and the Fajr salah becomes due. Once dawn breaks, the Muslim must abstain from eating, drinking, and whatever may break his fast.

The adhan for Fajr prayer may be given either after dawn breaks or before. If it is given after dawn breaks, then one must stop eating as soon as he hears the call, because the Prophet ﷺ said: "Bilal gives the call to prayer at night, so eat and drink until Ibn Umm Maktum gives the call to prayer, for he does not give the call until dawn has broken."



Supposing that the Adhan is called on time (true fajr), and one still has some food or drink in his hands, he is better advised not to consume it; he may, however, swallow what is already in his mouth. Otherwise, we should stop eating as soon as we hear him. If we eat after this, then our fasting is invalid and we have to make up for this day later on. If we know that the muadhdhin gives the call to prayer early before the dawn has broken, then there is no problem to eat while the muaddhin is calling the adhan. This is because what matters is the start of the true time of the prayer entering rather than the adhan for the prayer being called.

Most of the muaddhins nowadays rely on clocks and timetables, and not on the actual sighting of the dawn, and this cannot be regarded as a certainty that dawn or true Fajr has broken. So, if a person is still eating at this time, their fast is valid because they were not certain that the true dawn had broken. But it is better and more on the safe side to refrain from things that break the fast when one hears the adhan.

As for the hadith of Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه mentioned above that allows eating or drinking while the adhan is being called, then scholars have a difference of opinion.



Imam Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله stated in Tahdhib al-Sunan that some of the salaf followed the apparent meaning of the hadith mentioned in the question, and they regarded it as permissible to eat and drink after hearing the adhan of Fajr. Then he said, "But the majority are of the view that sahoor should stop when dawn breaks. This is the view of the four imams, and the majority of fuqaha of the regions, and was also narrated by Umar and Ibn Abbas.

The scholars say that the eating and drinking in the hadith referred to the adhan of Ibn Umm Makhtum and not the adhan of Bilal aka the muaddhin was making the adhan before the appearance of the true dawn. So there was no issue with people continuing to eat or drink and wrap up what they had already started. Some scholars even questioned the authenticity of this narration. But even if it was authentic, Imam Ibn al-Muflih رحمه الله said, "If this hadith is authentic then it means that the appearance of dawn has not been established."

In the same vein of suhoor, scholars mention that if a person is engaged in intercourse and dawn comes, they are obliged to withdraw, and their fast will be valid even if they ejaculate after the withdrawal. But if the person continues with the deed even after dawn, then he has broken his fast. Such a person is to repent, make the fast up later, and offer expiation.



Fasting for The Elderly and the Sick

Out of His Immense Mercy, Allah has only enjoined fasting upon those who are able to do it, and He has excused those who are unable to fast because of a legitimate Shar'i reason.

Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه narrated, "An elderly man is permitted to break his fast, but he must feed a poor person daily, and he does not have to make up for it." [Daraqutni]

From this we learn that an elderly person who cannot fast does not fast, and feeds one poor person for each missed day. The issue being highlighted here is that the elderly person cannot fast or that fasting will harm their health. If a person is 90+ years old, but Allah has Blessed him with good health, and he wishes to fast, then he is most welcome to fast.

Sheikh Maqsood al-Hasan Faizi حفظه الله mentions that scholars do qiyas on this for the ruling on people who are doing certain jobs because of which they cannot fast at all. If the person is to leave the job, the family will have nothing to eat. Such a person will take the ruling of an elderly person who cannot fast and their judgement is left to Allah.

The exemption of fasting for the sick person is conditional to them actually being sick. This might sound like a no-brainer but there are people who do not fast by making excuses for sickness that are not substantiated. This exemptions is for those that are actually sick and not just feeling like it. The sickness has to be validated by an expert, and trustworthy doctor.

What is meant by sickness is a degree where:

- The sickness can become worse if one fasts
- The recovery might be delayed if one fasts
- The fasting will cause intense hardship, even if it does not make the sickness worse or delay recovery
- Scholars also included those who fear that they may genuinely become sick because of fasting.

Imam al-Nawawi رحمه الله said, "With regard to the person who is slightly sick and who does not suffer any obvious hardship, it is not permissible for him to break his fast, and there is no difference of opinion among us concerning that." He further said, "The healthy person who fears that he may become sick if he fasts is like the sick person who fears that his sickness may get worse, they are both permitted to break their fasts, because the sick person is permitted to break his fast because of the fear that his fasting may make his sickness worse and last for longer, and the fear that fasting may cause sickness is similar to that." [al-Majmu']



Imam Ibn Qudamah رحمه الله said: "The scholars agree that it is permissible for the sick person not to fast in general. The basis of that is the ayah in which Allah says:

﴿فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ﴾^٤
 "but if any of you is ill or on a journey, the same number (should be made up) from other days."
 [Surah al-Baqarah, 184]

It was narrated that Salamah ibn al-Akwa' رضي الله عنه said: "When this ayah was revealed – 'And as for those who can fast with difficulty, (e.g. an old man), they have (a choice either to fast or) to feed a Miskin (poor person) (for every day)' – those who wanted not to fast could do that, and pay the fidyah (i.e., feed one poor person for each day).

That remained the case until the following ayah was revealed:

﴿وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ ۖ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ ۚ وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ ۖ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ﴾

And upon those who are able [to fast, but with hardship] - a ransom [as substitute] of feeding a poor person [each day]. And whoever volunteers good [i.e., excess] - it is better for him. But to fast is best for you, if you only knew. [Surah al-Baqarah, 184]



Explaining further, Sheikh Ibn al-Uthaymeen رحمه الله said, "The situation of the one who is sick may be of different types:

1. Cases that are not affected by fasting, such as a slight cold, a mild headache, toothache, and the like. In such cases, it is not permissible for him to break the fast.
2. Cases where it is difficult for him to fast, but it will not harm him. In this case, it is makruh for him to fast and it is Sunnah for him to break the fast.
3. Cases in which it is difficult for him to fast and he will be harmed by that, as in the case of a man who has kidney disease, diabetes, and the like. In such cases, it is haram for him to fast.
[Sharh al-Mumti']

If one doesn't fast due to old age or chronic illness, then they feed one poor person for every day the amount equivalent to kafarah; which is 1 Mudd of wheat or 1/2 Sa'a of any other staple food. 1 mudd is basically what can fit in your two palms (approx 0.65 kg) and 1/2 sa'a (approx 1.03 kg) is the double of that. This is based on the explanation of Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه as found in Sahih al-Bukhari.



Imam Daraqutni narrated that Anas ibn Malik رضي الله عنه was once too weak to fast. So he prepared a bowl of thareed (a dish of soaked bread, meat, and broth) and invited thirty poor people, and fed them such that they were satisfied.

Some scholars also state that the safest thing to do is to feed ten poor people after the first ten days have passed, then another round when the second ten-day interval has passed, and then the last round of feeding ten more poor people in the final ten-day interval. There is scope in the manner and time of feeding InshaAllah.

Imam Ibn Qaid رحمه الله says that anyone suffering from a chronic illness takes the ruling of an elderly person. If either is traveling, then they are not required to pay the kafarah or make-up that day as being in a state of travel is a concession.

As per the Hanabilah it is considered makruh for an ill person whose illness will be aggravated and a traveling person to fast. Let's explore this further. It is Sunnah for the ill person to not fast, and it is makruh for him to finish his fast because that could result in his death. However, if the sick person fears that fasting will worsen his illness, slow down his recovery, or harm a part of his body, he has the option of not fasting.



He must exercise caution and defend himself. Furthermore, if the sick person is severely ill, it is acceptable for him to skip the fast. However, if a healthy person only experiences fatigue while fasting, it is not permitted for him to break his fast.

Imam Ibn Qudamah رحمه الله said, "If a sick person is able to put up with fasting and does so, then he has done something which is makruh, because of the harm that results from that and because he has neglected the concession granted by Allah. [al-Mughni]

Exams are not an excuse for breaking one's fast during Ramadan. In this scenario, it is actually impermissible to obey one's parents if they insist on breaking the fast because of having exams. The basic principle is that there is no obedience to any created being if it involves disobedience to the Creator.

Aishah رضي الله عنها narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "Whoever dies while he still has some fasts to make up (of the days of Ramadan), then his heir (any of them) should fast on his behalf." [Agreed Upon]



We learn from this hadith that it is permissible to fast on behalf of the dead person the fasts that were pending on their shoulders like the pending fasts of Ramadan, violating oaths, kaffarah, or fidyah, etc.

The heirs refer to those family members that inherit from the person. Imam Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan رحمه الله cites an ijma and states that the obligation mentioned here for the heirs is that of recommendation (istihbab) and not an obligation (wujub). Only if the person mentions his pending fasts in the will, the heirs will have to pay the fidyah for it from the estate before distribution of the inheritance or they fast on behalf. Scholars say that a friend or similar can also keep the fast on the deceased's behalf to remove this burden from their shoulder.



When Imam al-Bukhari left fasting due to a minor illness

Imam al-Hakim narrated, Muhayab bin Aslam said that I heard Muhammad bin Ismail al-Bukhari رحمه الله saying, "I was afflicted with minor illness in Naysabur in the month of Ramadan. Ishaq bin Rahwayh (رحمه الله) came to visit me with his students.

He said, 'O Abu Abdullah are you not fasting? I (al-Bukhari) said, 'Yes I am not fasting.' He (Ishaq bin Rahwayh) said, 'I fear that you left obligatory fasting due to a small reason.'

Imam al-Bukhari replied, 'Abdan narrated to me, he heard from Abdullah bin Mubarak who heard from Ibn Juraij who asked from (great Tabiyye) Ata bin Abi Rabah that is it allowed to leave obligatory fasting due to any illness? Ata replied: It can be any illness (small or extreme) because Allah says: "So whoever among you is ill" (Surah al-Baqarah, 184)." Imam al-Bukhari said this (fatwa) was not known to Ishaq.



Fasting for The Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women

Allah says,

فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ
وَعَلَى

But whoever of you is ill or on a journey, then let them fast an equal number of days after Ramadan [Surah al-Baqarah, 184]

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Verily Allah the Almighty and the Most Exalted Removes fasting and half of the prayer for the traveler, and He Removes fasting for a pregnant woman and a nursing mother." [Ahmad]

This section can be broken down into three scenarios:

- If the pregnant or breastfeeding woman fears only for herself, then she breaks the fast, only makes up for that day, and doesn't need to pay an expiation for it as she falls under the category of an ill person. There is no difference of opinion on this matter among the scholars. This fear has to be legitimate and backed by a Muslim doctor.



- If the pregnant or breastfeeding woman fears for herself and the baby, then she breaks the fast, only makes up for that day, and doesn't need to pay an expiation. When she fears for the child, then it is as though she is fearing for herself as well, and this then becomes similar to the first category. This fear has to be legitimate and backed by a Muslim doctor.
- If the pregnant or breastfeeding woman fears for her child alone and not herself, then the scholars differ. She might be worried about her milk reduction or the baby in the stomach or similar. The scholars all agree that she is permitted to break her fast.

The Hanafi and the Maliki scholars say that a pregnant woman only needs to make up the days that she has missed and that is it as that is the original ruling for anyone who has missed their fast. The Malikis also state that the breastfeeding woman makes up the fast and also feeds a poor person. The Shafi'i and the Hanbali scholars say that both the pregnant and breastfeeding woman needs to make up the fast and give an expiation for the missed day of fasting.



The safest opinion is that she is permitted to break the fast out of fear for her child and make up for it later. This fear has to be legitimate and backed by a Muslim doctor. The guardian has to pay the expiation (feeding one poor person) on behalf of the mother for every day that she misses. Why? Because he is the father of the child, the husband, the guardian, and the maintainer of the family. Simple.

Whoever breaks their fast because of a valid legal reason, they are to make up that day of the missed fast. This is the agreed-upon established principle.

Imam Nafi' رحمه الله said, "One of Ibn Umar's رضي الله عنهم daughters was married to a man from the Quraysh. She was pregnant and would become very thirsty during Ramadan. Ibn Umar told her to break her fast and to feed a poor person in lieu of every day." [Daraqutni]

Similar to the fatwa of Ibn Umar رضي الله عنهم is the fatwa of Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنهم. Imam Abu Dawud records that Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه says that the Ayah 184 of Surah al-Baqarah as cited above proves a concession for the elderly as well as the pregnant and breastfeeding women who fear for their children. There is no dispute of these fatawa from among the sahaba.



What should a woman do if she has pending fasts from last year and the next Ramadan has entered? Our Sheikh, Maqsood ul Hassan Faizi حفظه الله said, "Such a woman needs to fast during the current month of Ramadan. After it ends, she needs to make up the pending fasts from last year and on top of that pay fidyah for the days that were missed. This was narrated from 5-6 sahabah including Ibn Abbas, Abu Hurairah, and others."



Fasting While Travelling

The traveler is allowed to break his fast by the consensus of the scholars. This is irrespective of whether the traveler is able to continue fasting or not, and whether it is difficult for him to fast or not. Even if his journey is easy and he has someone to serve him, he is still permitted to break his fast and shorten his prayers.

Imam al-Qurtubi رحمه الله in his tafseer gives a warning to those setting out to travel. He says, "Whoever is determined to travel in Ramadan should not have the intention of breaking his fast until he is actually traveling, because something may happen to prevent him from setting out on his journey."

Scholars further add that a person should not break their fast until they have reached a point where they are now considered to be a traveler. Like in the case of shortening the prayers, there is a time limit. Whoever travels to a place and intends to stay there for more than four days must fast, according to the majority of scholars. The person is no longer considered a traveler but instead is considered as a resident of that location.



From the Seerah of the Prophet ﷺ, we see that he traveled during the month of Ramadan for the Conquest for Makkah and still broke his fast. Jabir رضي الله عنه narrated, 'The Messenger of Allah ﷺ left for Makkah during the year of the conquest (of Makkah) in Ramadan and he and the people with him fasted until he reached the valley of Kura Al-Ghamim. He then called for a cup of water, which he elevated so that the people could see it, and then he drank. Afterwards, he was told that some people had continued to fast, and he then said, "Those are the disobedient ones! Those are the disobedient ones!" [Muslim] Another narration shows that this happened after the Asr prayer.

Imam Ibn al-Musayyab رحمه الله said, "Umar رضي الله عنه said, 'We went out on two campaigns with the Prophet in Ramadan, the day of Badr and the Conquest (of Makkah), and we broke the fast during both.'" [Lataif al-Ma'arif]

A second scenario is that one is allowed to fast if they can. The Companions used to accompany Allah's Messenger ﷺ on his journeys during the month of Ramadan as we saw. Anas bin Malik رضي الله عنه reported, "We would travel with the Prophet ﷺ and those who fasted did not blame those who broke their fast, and those who broke their fast did not blame those who fasted."



In another narration, Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri رضي الله عنه said, "Their view is that whoever found the strength to fast, he fasted and that was good. Whoever found himself too weak to fast, he broke his fast and that was good." [Agreed Upon]

As a result, it is said that breaking the fast mentioned in this hadith of Jabir was not necessary. The Prophet ﷺ would have chastised those who fasted if the hadith's command required breaking one. Even Allah's Messenger ﷺ himself observed fasts on certain occasions. For instance, Abu Ad-Darda رضي الله عنه is quoted as saying in the two Sahihs, "We once went with Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) during Ramadan while the heat was intense. Due to the intense heat, one of us would put his hand on his head. There were only two people fasting at the time: Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) and Abdullah bin Rawahah."

Till now we have seen that some scholars allowed for the traveling person to fast and others have said that the traveler can continue fasting as the Prophet ﷺ fasted as a general rule and only broke his fast to make it easy for those with him that were finding it difficult to fast.



Some scholars say that the two actions are the same in terms of reward and either can be done. A companion named Hamza bin 'Amr al-Aslami رضي الله عنه narrated, "I said to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) 'O Messenger of Allah (ﷺ)! I find within me the strength to fast while traveling. Would there be any blame upon me if I were to do so?' The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said to him, "It is a concession from Allah. Whoever takes it has done well. Whoever likes to fast, there is no blame upon him." [Muslim]

It might come as a surprise to some readers, but it is indeed better to break the fast while traveling as Allah's Messenger ﷺ said about fasting while traveling in the above hadith, "Whoever takes it has done well. Whoever likes to fast, there is no blame upon him."

If the fast becomes difficult while traveling, then breaking the fast is indeed better. Narrated by Jabir bin Abdullah رضي الله عنه that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) was on a journey and saw a crowd of people, and a man was being shaded (by them). He asked, "What is the matter?" They said, "He (the man) is fasting." The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "It is not from righteousness that you fast on a journey." [Bukhari and Muslim]

In another Hadith, the Prophet ﷺ said, "Hold to Allah's permission that He has granted you." [Muslim]



Ibn Umar رضي الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Allah loves His concessions to be accepted just as He hates for acts of disobedience to be committed." [Ahmad]

If a person is in the flight, he does not break the fast based on the timing of the place he is flying over. Rather, he keeps fasting till he can see the sun setting. He needs to see the disk of the sun setting from the plane for him to be able to break the fast.

As for making up for missed fasting days, it is not required to be consecutive but it is best to be done in this manner as it would imitate the fasting of Ramadan that is done consecutively. There is scope for flexibility in this matter InshaAllah. The bottom line requirement is that one has to make up for the missed days.

If a person starts fasting Ramadan in one location and then travels to another location where the people started fasting before him or after him, then he should follow what the people are following. This person should only end his fasts of Ramadan when the locals end their Ramadan. Why?

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Fast when everyone is fasting, and break your fast when everyone is breaking their fast."



In these scenarios, it could be that a person might end up fasting for 31 days. In some scenarios, it could also mean that a person might have fasted for 28 days or so. The basic rule is that if a person fasts more than 30 days then then extra days are counted as voluntary fasts. But if the fasts are less than 29 days, then he must make it up after Eid, because a hijri month cannot be less than 29 days.



Breaking the Fast & Dua while Breaking The Fast

Umar bin Al-Khattab رضي الله عنه reported: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "When the night approaches from this side (i.e., the east) and the day retreats from that side (i.e., west) and the sun sets, then it is time for a person observing Saum (fasting) to break his fast." [Bukhari and Muslim]

The beginning and end time is based on the sun and not the mere calling of the adhan. It needs to be kept in mind that the muaddhin being human can be delayed or make a mistake in calling the adhan at the right time. A fasting person refrains from things that break the fast from the true dawn until the sun sets. True dawn refers to when dawn breaks, not the adhan. The time to break the fast is as soon as the entire disk of the sun has disappeared. One should not pay attention to the lingering red glow that remains on the horizon.

A person should hasten to break their fast. This is a stressed upon Sunnah. The Prophet (ﷺ) would not pray Maghrib until he had broken his fast, if only with a sip of water. [Hakim]

Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrated, 'The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "Allah, the Most Exalted said: "Those among My servants, who hasten to break their fast, are the most beloved (or dearest) to Me." [Tirmidhi]

Sahl ibn Sa'd رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "The people will continue to be fine so long as they hasten to break their fast." [Bukhari]

Commenting on this, Imam al-Nawawi رحمه الله said, "This hadith means that we are encouraged to hasten to break the fast after ascertaining that the sun has indeed set. What this means is that the ummah's affairs will continue to be in order and they will be fine so long as they adhere to this Sunnah. But if they delay breaking the fast, that will be an indication of some misguidance that they are following." [Sharh Sahih Muslim]

A person should break his fast by saying 'Bismillah'. After breaking the fast, the dua that can be recited is:

ذَهَبَ الظَّمَأُ وَابْتَلَّتْ الْعُرُوقُ وَثَبَتَ الْأَجْرُ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

The thirst is gone, the veins are moistened and the reward is confirmed, if Allah wills. [Abu Dawud]

There is another famous dua that is recited:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي لَكَ صُمْتُ وَبِكَ آمَنْتُ [وَعَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْتُ] وَعَلَى رِزْقِكَ أَفْطَرْتُ

O Allah! I fasted for You and I believe in You [and I put my trust in You] and I break my fast with Your sustenance.



This was recorded by Imam Abu Dawud. It is a mural hadith (wherein a Tabi'i attributes the Hadith directly to Prophet ﷺ). Besides the bracketed part, all of these phrases are found in the different narrations as well. Most scholars classified it as dhaeef and some allowed its recital. To be on the safe side, it is best to stick to what is authentically attributed to the Prophet ﷺ. If one does want to recite this dua then they should recite it as a dua that they are making to Allah and not attribute it as a dua taught by the Prophet.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "There are three whose supplication will not be rejected: the fasting person at the time of breaking his fast; the just ruler and the supplication of an oppressed person." [Ahmad]

The Prophet ﷺ said, "The fasting person has two occasions for joy, one when he breaks his fast and the other when he meets his Lord." [Tirmidhi]

Anas رضي الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ used to break his fast with fresh dates before praying; if fresh dates were not available, he would eat (dried) dates; if dried dates were not available, he would have a few sips of water." [Tirmidhi] If a fasting person cannot find anything with which to break his fast, he can simply have the intention that he has terminated his fast and that should suffice.

Fasting can be broken by all permissible means. It is reported that some Sahaba even did their Iftar by having intercourse with their wives. Imam Ibn Sirin records that Ibn Umar رضي الله عنهم sometimes did his Iftar by means of intercourse. [Tabarani] Imam Badruddin al-'Ayini al-Hanafi رحمه الله said, "This could be because of his desires, or it could be that he didn't like some of the food that was prepared for Iftar. [Umdat al-Qari].

What if a person is unsure if the sun has set or if he eats and then finds out that the sun hasn't set yet? We see this happening during the time of the Prophet ﷺ. Asma' bint Abi Bakr رضي الله عنها said, "We broke our fast on a cloudy day at the time of the Prophet ﷺ, then the sun appeared." [Bukhari] From this incident, we learn that that the sahaba did not break their fast on the basis of certain knowledge, because if they had broken their fast on the basis of certain knowledge the sun would not have appeared after that. They broke their fast on the basis of their approximation that most likely the sun had set.

Such a person has not sinned, but as per the safest opinion, the fast for that day needs to be made up. Imam Ibn Qudamah رحمه الله said, " This is the view of most of the scholars, fuqaha' and others." [al-Mughni]



Some scholars like Imam Mujahid, al-Muzani, Ibn Khuzaymah, Ibn Taymiyyah and others opined that one doesn't need to make up the fast as there is nothing explicitly reported on the matter. But as we said, the best is to make up for that day and remain on the safe side as the fasting of Ramadan is an obligatory fast that cannot be taken lightly.





Invalidators of Fasting

Our Sheikh Ibrahim Nuhu حفظه الله said, For the fast to be nullified, three conditions have to be met. If even one condition is not met, the fast is still valid.

1. **Al-Ilm:** This is knowledge of the hukm, not the consequences of the hukm. Valid ignorance of the ruling excuses the person.
2. **Dhikr:** Remembrance - At the time of breaking the fast you remember that you are fasting. Eating out of forgetfulness doesn't break the fast.
3. **Al-Ikhtiyar:** Freedom - You have a choice to break the fast. If you are forced to break it, then your fast is still valid.

There are six umbrella categories of things that break the fast:

1. Sexual Acts
2. Eating or similar
3. Drinking or similar
4. Hijamah or similar
5. Induced Vomiting
6. Menstruation or Post Partum Bleeding

Allah says,

أَجَلَ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصَّيَامِ الرَّفْتُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ بَشَرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ثُمَّ أَتُمُوا الصَّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ وَلَا تُبَشِّرُوهُنَّ وَأَنْتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَجِدِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرُبُوهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ

It has been made permissible for you to be intimate with your wives during the nights preceding the fast. Your spouses are a garment¹ for you as you are for them. Allah knows that you were deceiving yourselves. So He has accepted your repentance and pardoned you. So now you may be intimate with them and seek what Allah has prescribed for you. 'You may' eat and drink until you see the light of dawn breaking the darkness of night, then complete the fast until nightfall. Do not be intimate with your spouses while you are meditating in the mosques. These are the limits set by Allah, so do not exceed them. This is how Allah makes His revelations clear to people, so they may become mindful 'of Him'. [Surah al-Baqarah, 187]

Sexual Acts

Intercourse is the most serious and the most sinful of the things that invalidate the fast. Scholars define this as - A person who has intercourse during the day in Ramadan deliberately and of his or her own free will, in which the two circumcised parts meet and the tip of the penis disappears in either of the two passages, has invalidated his fast, whether he ejaculates or not.

As long as intercourse occurs, irrespective of ejaculation, the fast is invalidated. This is considered a major sin. The person has to abstain from eating or drinking for the rest of the day. The person needs to make up for the day, increase in abundant repentance for this major sin and pay the expiation that is due.

In a long narration from Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه we see that: A man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, "I am ruined O Messenger of Allah (ﷺ)!" The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) asked him, "What has ruined you?" The man replied, 'I had intercourse with my wife during the day in Ramadan while fasting)' The Prophet said to him, "Are you able to free a slave?" The man said, 'No.'

The Prophet said, "Can you fast for two consecutive months?" He said, 'No.'

The Prophet then asked him, "Can you provide food for sixty poor people?" He said, 'No.' Then the man sat down.

A basket of dates was brought to the Prophet and he said to the man, "Give this as sadaqah" The man said, 'To someone who is poorer than us!' There is no one in this city (Al-Madinah) who is in need of these dates more than us!'

The Prophet laughed until his molar teeth could be seen and said to the man, "Go and feed your family with these dates." [Muslim]

From this we learn about the 3 levels of expiation. The sequence has to be maintained. Imam al-Tirmidhi رحمه الله mentions over 30 Imams from the salaf who narrated this sequence to be mandatory and that one could not merely pick and choose from them as an option. The expiation is to free an able-bodied believing slave. If one slave is not available, then the person has to fast for 60 days consecutively. If this is not possible, then the person feeds 60 people each a measurement of 1 mudd of wheat or 1/2 sa'a of dates, raisins, barley, etc. If this is also not possible, then the expiation is voided and the person should only increase in repentance to Allah.

Some scholars said that just one person could be fed 60 times or 30 people could be fed twice and that the number of individual people didn't matter. What is the safest and easiest option today is to feed 60 poor people till they are full and there is scope in the matter.



We also learn that just being poor didn't automatically waive the person from expiation. The Prophet ﷺ gave the man dates to go out and feed the poor. This shows that if a poor person gets wealth, the expiation that is on his shoulders becomes due and he should pay it off. This is the safest position as chosen by the majority of the scholars.

We also see that the wife of the person was not mentioned. It is understood by default that what applies to the husband also applies to the wife. But, as we mentioned at the start, if she was forced, then there is no expiation due upon her and she only has to make up for that day.

There is no concept of slavery today so one cannot of course free a slave. In this case, by default, a person goes to the second point of expiation.

Expiation is to be paid for each day separately. If one indulges in intercourse more than once in a day, then expiation is paid only once, provided that it hasn't been paid before having intercourse again on the same day. If not, then another expiation is due on it. If one has intercourse and then falls ill, loses their aql, or travels, they still have to pay the expiation for it. Intercourse is the only thing in Ramadan that necessitates an expiation.



No expiation is required for any of the things that break the fast apart from intercourse. This is one of the severest expiations that have been legislated.

Masturbation and foreplay etc which falls under physical stimulation results in pre-seminal fluid (madhi) or ejaculation (mani). If there is an emission of mani, then this invalidates the fast with no difference of opinion.

Scholars differed over madhi. Imams Abu Hanifah and al-Shafi'i are of the view that the emission of madhi does not invalidate the fast in any case, whether it is caused by direct physical contact or otherwise, and that what invalidates the fast is the emission of mani, not madhi. [al-Mughni] The Hanabila are more strict on this matter and state that the emission of madhi in these conditions is also considered as an invalidator.

Invalidating a person's fast needs evidence. To be on the safe side, one should avoid any kind of stimulation that leads to the emission of madhi. That being said, there is no proof to support the view that emission of madhi invalidates the fast. Based on this, most of the scholars opine that the emission of pre-seminal fluid (madhi) does not invalidate the fast as the Prophet ﷺ allowed people to kiss their wives and that would naturally lead to the emission of madhi.



Whoever masturbates during the day in Ramadan has invalidated their fast. They are to repent to Allah, refrain from eating and drinking for the rest of the day, and he has to make up that fast later on.

Visual stimulation from repeated glances that produces orgasmic fluid (mani) breaks the fast, but if it is only madhi, then it doesn't break the fast.

Imam al-Nawawi رحمه الله said, "If he kisses her or is intimate with her, without having intercourse, or he touches a woman's skin with his hand or otherwise, if he emits mani then his fast is invalidated, otherwise it is not. The author of al-Haawi and others narrated that there was scholarly consensus that the fast of one who kisses his wife or is intimate without having intercourse and ejaculates is invalidated." [al-Majmu']

Thinking (mental stimulation) that leads to ejaculation does not invalidate the fast. Imam Ibn Qaid رحمه الله says that this is lower than repeated visual stimulation. Sensual thoughts can be something very difficult to control as compared to one's repeated vision which in reality can be controlled.



Hence, they cannot be equated together. Wet dreams and something entering the body through the urethra even if it reaches the bladder don't break the fast. This is because a person has no control over wet dreams and their occurrence.

To have intercourse just before the adhan of Fajr is also disliked. A traveller returning home or someone ill who has recovered during the day has to abstain from intercourse and fast the rest of the day.

People who were permitted to break their fast, like a traveller on a journey where the prayer can be shortened or an ill person; decide to have intercourse during the day, then they have to only make up for that day of Ramadan. Why? Their fasting is considered as voluntary fasting in this case.



Eating and Drinking

This refers to food or drink reaching the stomach via the mouth. But if this happens somehow via the nose, then that also takes the same ruling.

Allah says.

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۚ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا
 اكْتَسَبَتْ ۗ رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِن نَّسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا ۚ

Allah does not require of any soul more than what it can afford. All good will be for its own benefit, and all evil will be to its own loss. 'The believers pray, "Our Lord! Do not punish us if we forget or make a mistake." [Surah al-Baqarah, 286]

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Whoever forgets that he is fasting and eats or drinks, let him complete his fast, for the One Who fed him and gave him to drink was Allah." [Agreed Upon]

From this we learn that whoever forgetfully eats or drinks, then they continue to fast and they don't need to repeat that day of fasting. The Prophet ﷺ said: "Whoever breaks his fast in Ramadan by mistake does not have to make up that day or offer expiation." [Ibn Khuzaymah]



Imam al-Nawawi رحمه الله said, "This is evidence to support the view of the majority: if the fasting person eats or drinks or has intercourse because of forgetfulness, then he does not break his fast. Among those who were of this view are al-Shafi'i, Abu Hanifah, Dawud and others."

Just because the person has forgotten that they are fasting, doesn't mean that one shouldn't remind them if they do see them eating or drinking out of error. Whoever sees a Muslim drinking or eating during the day in Ramadan, or doing anything else that breaks the fast, has to tell him off, because doing that openly during the day in Ramadan is wrong. It is a misconception that one shouldn't remind a person as this is depriving them from the Mercy of Allah. This is a wrong understanding.

A funny incident was narrated by 'Abd al-Razzaaq from 'Amr ibn Dinar رحمه الله: that a person came to Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه and said: "I started fasting in the morning then I forgot and ate." He said, "It does not matter." He said: "Then I entered upon someone and by mistake I ate and drank." He said, "It does not matter, Allaah has fed you and given you to drink." Then he said: "I entered upon another person and forgot, and ate." Abu Hurairah said: "You are a person who is not used to fasting."



Inhaling a fly, smoke, or dust from the road etc does not break the fast. This is because in most if not all cases, it is not possible to avoid that, and also because the person doesn't intend that or want it to happen.

Likewise, unintentional ingestion of water during ghusl or wudhu even if it was done more than three times or excessively doesn't break the fast. It is considered to be disliked to do so in the state of fasting. Activities like swimming etc which opens one to the possibility of accidentally ingesting water are considered to be makruh.

This is why Imam al-Bukhari رحمه الله titled a chapter in his Sahih: "Chapter on a fasting person if he eats or drinks because he forgets." Then he said: 'Ata' said: "If a person rinses his nose and water enters his throat, then is no sin on him because he did not intend to do that. But if he can prevent the water from entering his throat, but he does not try to stop it and instead swallows it, then he breaks his fast."



When it comes to injections and similar, the purpose of it needs to be checked. If what is being administered is a nourishing substance like in the case of drip etc then it takes the same ruling as food and drink. On the other hand, if what is being administered is for the purpose of medical treatment like insulin to diabetic people, for vaccination, or similar then these do not affect the fast, whether they are intravenous or intramuscular (injected into a vein or a muscle).

Kidney dialysis among patients where the blood is extracted, cleaned and then returned to the body with the addition of certain chemical substances such as sugars and salts etc invalidates the fast. This refers to things that nourish the body.

Anything reaching the brain or back of the throat invalidates the fast. Eye drops, fine powders etc which reach the throat through the eye ducts also invalidate the fast. This needs to be taken care of because the eyes, ears, and nose are connected in a certain manner. In a similar vein, applying kohl to one's eyes does not break one's fast as all narrations that are present with regards to this matter are all authentic.



Otherwise, as per the fatwa of Sheikhul Islam Ibn Taimiyyah رحمه الله, enemas, eyedrops, eardrops, tooth extraction and treatment of injuries do not invalidate the fast. Likewise, tooth fillings, extractions or cleaning of the teeth, whether with a siwak or toothbrush, so long as one avoids swallowing anything that reaches the throat doesn't invalidate the fast.

Puffers used by asthma patients does not break the fast. It is a medical need where the gas enters the lungs, and it is not considered as food.

Inserting anything into the body, even if it is removed later invalidates the fast except for the urethra.

Waking up with food in the mouth that is spat out doesn't invalidate the fast. Accidentally swallowing it also does not break the fast. The fast is broken if it is done deliberately.

Absorbing something from the foot (some forms of homeopathy) that might lead to a taste in the mouth, doesn't break the fast.





Hijamah

The Prophet ﷺ said: "The cupper and the one for whom cupping is done have both invalidated their fast." [Abu Dawud]

What then about the ahadith that permit hijamah during fasting? Let's look at three ahadith:

- Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنهم narrated that The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) had himself cupped while he was in a state of Ihram, and had himself cupped while he was fasting." [Bukhari].
- Shaddad bin Aws رضي الله عنه narrated that The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) came across a man in Al-Baqi' (in Madinah) who was having himself cupped in Ramadan and said to him, "The one who cups and the one who is being cupped have both broken their fast." [Abu Dawud] This is a narration that as been narrated with authentic chains by over 18 sahaba.

- Anas رضي الله عنه narrated, 'The first time cupping was disliked (made impermissible) for the one who is fasting was when Ja'far bin Abi Talib had himself cupped while fasting and the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) came across him and said, "Those two have broken their fast (meaning Ja'far and the man who was cupping him.)" But later on the Prophet allowed cupping for the one who is fasting. Anas used to have himself cupped while he was fasting. [Daraqutni] Scholars have raised question on some narrators present in the chain of this narration.

The majority of the scholars and three of the four Imams hold that the fasting person's fast is not broken through cupping based on the last hadith of Anas رضي الله عنه which indicates that hijamah was initially prohibited, then later allowed and Anas himself used to get hijamah done while in a state of fasting. This was also the position of Abu Saeed al-Khudri, Ibn Mas'ud, and Umm Salamah رضي الله عنهم among other companions.



Other scholars opined that based on the mutawatir narrations that we have - getting hijamah done, or doing it on another person, the kind that draws blood breaks the fast. This is the position of Imams Ahmad, Ibn Khuzaimah, Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim etc among many hadith scholars. This was also the position of Ali, Aishah, Abu Hurairah, Ibn Abbas, رضي الله عنهم and other companions.

The safest opinion in this matter is to state that hijamah does indeed break the fast and that one should safeguard their fast from any differences of opinion and try to have hijamah done after one breaks their fast at Maghrib. Such people aka the cupper and the one upon whom cupping is done both break their fast. They should not eat, drink, or indulge in sexual desires for the remainder of that day, and they both have to make up that day later on.

What is it in Hijamah that invalidates ones fast? Hijamah is something exceptional. We do not employ qiyas in this matter to find a reason and submit to it as a ta'bbudi act of worship. After this, we can say that for the one getting cupped, it causes weakness, dizziness etc.



As per the safest opinion, it is also not permissible for a person who is fasting to donate blood unless it is absolutely essential. It is likened to cupping and takes the same ruling. Here, the donor has broken his fast and must make up that day later on.

With regard to taking blood from veins for testing etc, it is better to leave it until night-time. Some scholars say that it does not break the fast unless the blood is taken in large quantities. That being said, if it is done during the day then to be on the safe side that day should be made up because this is also likened to cupping. Blood tests where the blood extracted is minimal could be overlooked if there is an immediate need.

Nosebleeds, wounds, small cuts etc don't break the fast as it is something that is out of the control of the person.





Vomiting

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever vomits involuntarily does not have to make up the fast, but whoever vomits deliberately let him make up the fast." [Tirmidhi]

Whoever induces vomiting has invalidated their fast and needs to make it up.

Unintentional vomiting because of nausea etc does not break the fast and we have a consensus of the scholars on this matter. Such a person does not have to make up the fast and nor is there any expiation due from him in this case.

In a similar vein on involuntary actions, scholars mention that if a person doesn't have control over something, then it does not invalidate the fast. A person was forced to drink water or similar, then their fast is still valid. Likewise, if a woman was forced into having intercourse with her husband, then her fast is still valid. The husband is extremely sinful and will have to pay the fidyah and make up that day's fast.

There could be cases where a person overeats and gets a burp later where a person feels something in their throat. Such a thing does not break the fast and the safest position is to spit this out instead of swallowing it.

Abdullah ibn Umar رضي الله عنهم used to say, "If someone makes himself vomit while he is fasting he has to make up a day, but if he cannot help vomiting he does not have to make up anything."
[Muwatta]





Blood of Menses and Nifas

Menstruation comes from the word meaning the movement of water on the ground. Haydh literally means to flow. The Arabs used it to refer to the water that comes in a valley and takes away everything. As per the Shariah, it is the natural blood that comes from the lowest part of the womb at a specific time. It was created by Allah to sustain and feed the child in the womb.

Nifas refers to the postnatal bleeding period. As per this, a woman bleeds because of giving birth and is considered to be in a state of nifas. She remains so until she sees the tuhr or completes 40 days.

Imam al-Tirmidhi رحمه الله reported: "It is unanimously agreed upon among scholars from the sahabah and al-tabi'un that the nufasaa' does not pray for forty days unless she sees tuhr (blood stoppage) before the end of the forty days period. She should then perform ghusl and she resumes praying. The majority of the scholars say that a woman does pray even If she continues to notice blood after the forty days period expires and this is the opinion of the majority of fuqaha among whom Sufyan al-Thawri, Ibn Al-Mubarak, al-Shafi'i, Ahmad and Ishaq." [Tirmidhi]

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Is it not the case that when she gets her period, she does not pray or fast?" [Bukhari]

The moment a woman sees the blood of her period or nifas (postpartum bleeding), her fast becomes invalid. The ruling stands even if this is mere seconds before sunset. Likewise, if her bleeding stopped even a second before Fajr, then she is to fast and her fasting is valid. Her state at the point is considered as a person who is in a state of junub (needs to do ghusl).

If a woman feels that her period has started but no blood comes out until after sunset, her fast is still valid.

Mu'adha al-'Adawiya said that when she asked Aishah رضي الله عنها why one who has been menstruating must make up for her fast but not for her prayer, she replied, "That happened to us, and we were ordered to make up for the fast, but were not ordered to make up for the prayer." [Muslim]

A woman should not break her fast until she actually sees the blood. She should not fast based on when she has calculated or expects her menses to occur. Istihadah (non-menstrual vaginal bleeding) does not invalidate the fast.



Imagine this. Allah has given men 14 different ways to pray in congregation at a time of war. A blind man wasn't given a concession despite having a valid excuse just because he could hear the adhan. Despite all this, Allah has allowed women to completely forego, not pray during menstruation, and not to make up the missed prayers after attaining purity after menstruation. The only thing a woman does is to make up for the missed fasts that she missed in Ramadan. Allah Knows what a woman is going through in this sensitive condition. This shows the immense Love and Mercy that Allah has for His slaves.

If a woman experiencing nifas spent forty days and she still sees blood, then this blood is considered as istihadha (womb bleeding between periods). She can continue to fast and pray.

A woman should not take any medications to stop or delay her menstruations. Allah Knew that a woman would undergo menstruation in Ramadan and Legislated accordingly. Accepting the Design and Qadr of Allah is more important. Add to that, most of these medicines have side-effects on the health of the person which are detrimental in the long run. If a woman fasts while in a state of haydh or nifas is sinning as she is going against the direct Commandments of Allah.



The fasting of a person who is eating, drinking or committing intercourse while uncertain of sunrise is valid. The standard ruling is that it is night until it is proven that it is day. But if a person comes to know that it was day and they were doing any of the above actions, then the fast is to be made up. Similarly for sunset, one cannot break the fast till they are sure that the day has come to an end. Certainty is not removed by doubt.

As was listed above, these are things that invalidate the fast. All of them – apart from menses and nifas – only invalidate the fast if three conditions are met:

1. that the person was aware of the ruling and not ignorant of it;
2. that he did it knowingly and not out of forgetfulness;
3. that he did it by choice and was not forced to do it.



Disliked and Problematic Acts While Fasting

Even though it is not listed as an invalidator, the act of backbiting has been listed as one of the biggest sins that harms a persons fast. The Zahiri scholars and a few others claimed that backbiting invalidates ones fast.

Why did these scholars go to such an extent? They base their conclusion on the fact that Allah said,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ
إِثْمٌ ۖ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبِ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا ۚ أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ
أَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ
رَّحِيمٌ

O believers! Avoid many suspicions, for indeed, some suspicions are sinful. And do not spy, nor backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of their dead brother? You would despise that! And fear Allah. Surely Allah is the Acceptor of Repentance, Most Merciful. [Surah al-Hujurat. 12]

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud رضى الله عنه reported: We were sitting with the Prophet ﷺ when a man stood to leave, then another man spoke badly about him after he left. The Prophet said, "Pick your teeth." The man said, "O Messenger of Allah, why should I pick my teeth when I have not eaten meat?" The Prophet said, "You have eaten the flesh of your brother." [al-Mu'jam al-Kabir]

Imam Ibn al-Jawzi رحمه الله, "I have seen many people careful to avoid tiny drops of impurity splashing on them, yet do not avoid backbiting. And they donate much to charity but are not worried about their dealings in interest. And they rise from sleep for the night prayers, yet delay the obligatory prayer beyond its time.

And the truly pathetic person is he who wastes his life pursuing knowledge that he does not act upon, missing out on the enjoyment of this world and the delights of the next, and arrives there bankrupt while having strengthened the proofs against him!

Imam Yahya bin Katheer رحمه الله said, "A man keeps fast with Halal and breaks with Haram by eating the flesh of his brother (backbiting)." [Hilyat al-Awliyah]

That being said, we follow the fact that backbiting doesn't invalidate the fast but that it heavily reduces the reward of ones fast. Why? This is because the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Fasting is a shield as long as one does not pierce it, it was said: 'With what does one pierce it?', he said: 'With backbiting and lying'." [Tabarani]

Umar رضي الله عنه used to say, "Fasting does not mean keeping away from only food and drink, it also means keeping away from lying, falsehood, and swearing (by Allah without need)."



Imam Mujahid رحمه الله said, "There are two practices if a person can keep himself from them, his fast will be secured for him: backbiting and lying." [Ibn Abi Shaybah]

Jabir Ibn Abdullah رضي الله عنه said, "When you fast, then let your hearing, your sight, and your tongue fast and abstain from lies and haram things, and avoid harming your neighbour. Be tranquil and dignified and do not let the day you fast and the day you do not fast be the same. [Shu'ab al-Iman]

A few disliked practices include:

- It is disliked for one to gather saliva in their mouth and then swallow it. Some scholars even consider it to invalidate the fast.
- It is also disliked to taste food (even if there is a need) and strong gum. The gum here is the traditional gum, which is different as compared to our times, which is mostly sugars and flavour agents. The gum being mentioned generally leads to the production of saliva and aggravates thirst. If the flavour of the food or gum reaches the throat, then the fast is broken. Dissolvable gum is impermissible irrespective of the saliva etc.



- Swallowing phlegm breaks the fast irrespective of its place of origin, be it the chest or nasal cavity etc. Phlegm does not originate in the mouth like saliva. Saliva is very difficult to deal with. Saliva is excused as that is second nature and because of its common occurrence. Sometimes spitting out phlegm is not possible and hence the scholars say that it's closer to saliva and can also be excused. What's better is to avoid swallowing phlegm as and when possible. Swallowing blood and vomit takes the same ruling based on the above. If any of the above comes up, even in small quantities, then it needs to be spat out.
- Caressing, kissing, foreplay, repeated glances etc that stir a person's desires are disliked. These acts could potentially lead to breaking one's fast. If it is assumed that ejaculation might occur then it becomes impermissible to do these actions.
- It is obligatory to stay away from lying, backbiting and cursing. Imam Ahmad and Imam Bukhari record, the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Whoever does not give up forged speech and evil actions, Allah is not in need of his leaving his food and drink (i.e. Allah will not accept his fasting.)"



Fasting entails abstaining from misconduct and impermissible behaviour. Technically, it will not break your fast but it will diminish the rewards. Imam Ahmad says that a person must look after their tongue and not fall into argumentation while fasting. The fast needs to be protected. The salaf would keep to the masjid to save themselves from falling into sins.



When Is The Night of Power (Laylatul Qadr)?

Imam Ibn Qaid رحمه الله lists three reasons why this Night is called Laylatul Qadr:

1. When the decree is written for the entire year.
2. The Night has an important degree or a station with Allah.
3. The obedience/acts of worship on that Night has a high reward, which is 1000 months' worth.

It was narrated that Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه said: "The Messenger of Allah said: 'There has come to you Ramadan, a blessed month, which Allah, the Mighty, and Sublime, has enjoined you to fast. In it, the gates of the heavens are opened and the gates of Hell are closed, and every devil is chained up. In it Allah has a night which is better than a thousand months; whoever is deprived of its goodness is indeed deprived.'" [Ahmad]

Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه reported Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying: He who observed the fasts of Ramadan with faith and seeking reward (from Allah), all his previous sins would be forgiven, and he who observed prayer on Laylat al-Qadr with faith and seeking reward (from Allah), all his previous sins would be forgiven. [Muslim]



Imam an-Nawawi رحمه الله said, "The hadith of Ubayy ibn Ka'b says that he used to swear that it was the night of the twenty-seventh, but this is one of several opinions concerning it. Most of the scholars are of the view that it is an unknown night among the last ten nights of Ramadan, and it is most likely to be on an odd-numbered night, and the most likely night is the night of the twenty-seventh or the twenty-third of the twenty-first, but most of them are of the view that it is a specific night that does not move.

However, some scholars said that it does move, so in one year it may be the night of the twenty-seventh, and in another year it may be the night of the twenty-third, and in another year it may be the night of the twenty-first, or some other night, and this is more likely to be correct. In this way, we may reconcile among the different ahadith. [Sharh Sahih Muslim]

Sheikh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله said, "Laylat al-Qadr occurs in the last ten nights of the month of Ramadan. This is how it is authentically reported from the Prophet (ﷺ), that he said: "It is on the last ten days of Ramadan." And it happens on one of the odd nights (of these ten).



However, the odd nights can be in terms of what has passed, so it is sought on the nights of the twenty-first, the twenty-third, the twenty-fifth, the twenty-seventh, and the twenty-ninth.

And (odd nights) can also be in terms of what remains (of the month), as the Prophet ﷺ said: " (Seek it), when nine (nights) remain, when seven remain, when five remain, or when three remain.' Based on this, if the month is thirty days long, these (odd remaining nights) correspond with the (last ten) even nights from the (beginning of the month). And the twenty-second is when nine remain, and the night of the twenty-fourth is when seven remain. This is how it was explained by Abu Saeed al-Khudri in the authentic narrations. Thus, this is how the Prophet ﷺ held the night prayers during the month.

And if the month is twenty-nine days long, then (counting the) remainder of the month (produces the) same result as (counting) what has passed.

That being the case, the believer should seek it (Laylat al-Qadr) on all of the last ten nights, as the Prophet ﷺ said: "Seek it in the last ten nights and it will be more in the last seven (days)." And most often it is on the night of the twenty-seventh, as even Ubayy ibn Ka'b used to swear that it is the night of the twenty-seventh." [Majmu'al-Fatawa]



Our Sheikh Ibrahim Nuhu حفظه الله said, "All the signs indicating the Night of Power you get to see only after the Night has passed. Most of the signs are ijtiadat of the scholars except the sign of rain which is proven from the Prophet. Rain at the time of Fajr is one of the strongest signs of it being a Night of Power.

Say Alhamdulillah that the knowledge of this night is hidden. For was it known then no one would have worshipped Allah like they do except for that day. Go to Makkah on the 27 Night of Ramadan and it's like you are performing Hajj. The problem is when we just focus on the night of the 27th alone and neglect the other nights. We can find it on the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, or the 29th. For every one of these odd nights, we have authentic narrations to back them. Make the last 10 days of Ramadan come alive with your worship."

The following supplication is to be recited on that night – Aishah رضي الله عنها reported: I asked: "O Messenger of Allah! If I realize Lailat-ul-Qadr (Night of Decree), what should I supplicate in it?" He ﷺ replied, "You should supplicate:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ عَفُوٌّ تُحِبُّ الْعَفْوَ فَاعْفُ عَنِّي

O Allah, You are Most Forgiving, and You love forgiveness; so forgive me [Ahmad].



اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ عَفُوٌّ تُحِبُّ الْعَفْوَ
فَاعْفُ عَنِّي

“O Allah, You are Most Forgiving, and You love forgiveness; so forgive me.”

[Ahmad]

The Taraweeh Prayers

Scholars define taraweeh (تراويح) as the night prayer that is offered in congregation during the month of Ramadan. Its time is from after the sunnah prayers of the Isha salah till dawn. It is considered a mustahab (encouraged) act of worship. Interestingly, we don't find the term taraweeh in the Qur'an or the Sunnah. It was a term that was later coined by the scholars.

Voluntary night prayers are of 2 types. One is qiyam al-layl and the other is tahajjud. Qiyam al-layl which means standing up at night is more general whereas tahajjud is more specific in nature. All the voluntary prayers that are prayed after Isha and before Fajr are known as qiyam al-layl. Tahajjud on the other hand refers to those specific prayers that a person prays after waking up from sleep. To highlight the importance of qiyam al-layl in Ramadan, the term taraweeh was highlighted.

Allah says,

قُمْ أَيْلًا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

Stand all night in prayer except a little [Surah al-Muzzammil, 2]

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَّكَ عَسَىٰ أَن يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَّحْمُودًا

And rise at the last part of the night, offering additional prayers, so your Lord may raise you to a station of praise. [Surah al-Isra, 79]

The Prophet ﷺ said, "The best prayer after the obligatory prayer is prayer at night." [Muslim] and "You should pray qiyam al-layl, for it is the custom of the righteous who came before you and it brings you closer to your Lord and expiates sins and prevents misdeeds." [Tirmidhi]

Imam Ibn Katheer رحمه الله says, "Allah commanded His Messenger ﷺ to pray the Night prayer after offering the prescribed prayers, and the term Tahajjud refers to prayer that is offered after sleeping. This was the view of `Alqamah, Al-Aswad, Ibrahim An-Nakha`i and others."

During the early stages of Islam, Surah al-Muzzammil was revealed. This was before the five prayers were obligated. Everyone was obligated with the prayer of tahajjud. During the night of the Mi'raj (Ascent) that 5 prayers were made obligatory (fard). Tahajjud as an obligation was abrogated. The Prophet ﷺ continued to pray tahajjud daily. Why? Once a Prophet of Allah starts a good deed, they do not abandon it.



Qiyam al-Layl is a game-changer for the heart. Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-Aas رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever recites 10 ayat in qiyam will not be recorded as one of the forgetful."

Whoever recites a 100 ayat in qiyam will be recorded as one of the devout, and whoever recites a 1000 ayat in qiyam will be recorded as one of the muqantareen (those who pile up good deeds). [Abu Dawud] The muqantireen are those who will be given a qintaar of reward. A qintaar is a large amount of gold, and most of the scholars of the Arabic language are of the view that it is four thousand dinars.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever prays qiyam in Ramadan out of faith and in the hope of reward, his previous sins will be forgiven." [Bukhari]

As per Lisan al-Arab, "The word taraweeh is the plural of the word "tarweeha" which literally means 'to rest'. In the context of Salat al-Taraweeh, it means to rest between every four raka'at."



Imam Ibn Mandhur رحمه الله said, "the Tarwihah in Ramadan was called such because of the rest that people take after each set of four units of prayer and it (the word) means a single instance of rest."

According to Imam Ibn Hajr al-Asqalani رحمه الله - Qiyam of Ramadan is general i.e. it refers to any nawafil prayers and praying them in congregation is permissible. [Fathul Bari]



The Origins

Narrated 'Urwah رضي الله عنه: That he was informed by Aishah رضي الله عنها, "Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) went out in the middle of the night and prayed in the masjid and some men prayed behind him. In the morning, the people spoke about it and then a large number of them gathered and prayed behind him (on the second night). The next morning, the people again talked about it and on the third night the masjid was full with a large number of people. Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) came out and the people prayed behind him.

On the fourth night, the masjid was overwhelmed with people and could not accommodate them, but the Prophet (ﷺ) came out (only) for the morning prayer. When the morning prayer was finished he recited tashahhud and (addressing the people) said, "Amma Ba'du, your presence was not hidden from me but I was afraid lest the night prayer (Qiyam) should be enjoined on you and you might not be able to carry it on." So, Allah's Apostle died and the situation remained like that (i.e. people prayed individually)." [Bukhari]

Abdur Rahman bin Abdul Qari said, "I went out in the company of 'Umar bin al-Khattab رضي الله عنه one night in Ramadan to the masjid and found the people praying in different groups.

A man praying alone or a man praying with a little group behind him. So, Umar رضي الله عنه said, 'In my opinion, I would better collect these (people) under the leadership of one Qari (Reciter) (i.e. let them pray in congregation!)'. So, he made up his mind to congregate them behind Ubay bin Ka'b (رضي الله عنه).

Then on another night, I went again in his company and the people were praying behind their reciter. On that, Umar رضي الله عنه remarked, 'What an excellent Bid'ah this is; but the prayer which they do not perform, but sleep at its time is better than the one they are offering.' He meant the prayer in the last part of the night. (In those days) people used to pray in the early part of the night." [Bukhari]

Al-Hasan reported: Umar Ibn al-Khattab (رضي الله عنه) gathered the people (in taraweeh prayer) behind Ubayy ibn Ka'b who would perform 20 raka'at with them. [Abu Dawud]



The Yearly Debate: 8 vs 20

Coming to the yearly 8 vs 20 raka'at discussion that happens every year. Firstly, we need to revise and establish a very important principle.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "So hold fast to my Sunnah and to the Sunnah of the Khulafa ar-Rashideen (the rightly guided caliphs), those who guide to the right way. Cling to it stubbornly (literally: with your molar teeth). Beware of newly invented matters (in the religion), for verily every bidah (innovation) is misguidance." [Abu Dawud]

Secondly, we need to establish if there is even a fixed number of units specified by the Prophet ﷺ.

The methodology of offering the night prayer is that it is to be prayed in units of 2 raka'at each. Ibn Umar رضي الله عنهم reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Salat during the night should consist of pairs of but if you fear that morning is near, then pray one rak'ah as Witr." [Bukhari]

From this, we learn that the Prophet ﷺ, upon being asked about night prayers, said that they are to be done two by two, and he did not specify any particular number.

Is praying 20 raka'at taraweeh an innovation?

This is an incorrect and extremely dangerous statement to make. It is proven through multiple authentic chains of narration and recorded on the authority of giants like Imam Malik, Imam al-Ayni, etc in their books of hadith that Umar and Ali used to establish 20 raka'at in congregation during their respective caliphates. There was no objection or difference of opinion among the sahaba on this matter.

This accusation of 20 raka'at being an innovation was the same statement made by the rawafidh (Shia). They accused our leader, Umar Ibn al-Khattab رضي الله عنه for initiating the "innovated" practice of 20 raka'at in taraweeh.

Sheikh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله swiftly responded to this allegation and said, "If Umar رضي الله عنه by establishing 20 raka'at of taraweeh had been deemed to adopt a bad practise, then Ali Ibn Abi Talib رضي الله عنه would have put an end to this in his Khilafah. However, in the Khilafah of Ali Ibn Abi Talib, he too would read 20 raka'at taraweeh prayers in Kufa. In the month of Ramadan, Ali would state, 'May Allah enlighten the grave of Umar, just as he has enlightened our masajid for us.'" [Minhaj as-Sunnah]



Is there anything that is a “good bid’ah”?

What did Umar ibn al-Khattab رضي الله عنه mean when he called taraweeh a good innovation? Sheikh Ibn Baz رحمه الله summarised and said, "What is correct is that every innovation is misguidance. Some scholars say: Good innovation, such as the compilation of the Mushaf and the taraweeh prayer, but what is correct is that all innovations are misguidance. There is nothing in them that is good. He (ﷺ) said: 'Every innovation is misguidance,' and he did not differentiate (between good and bad).

Therefore, the compilation of the mushaf is not an innovation, but rather, the Companions compiled it since they were commanded to preserve the Book of Allah. Thus, preserving and taking care of it so that nothing is lost is a command, making it compulsory. Likewise, the taraweeh prayer is not an innovation since the Prophet (ﷺ) performed it. (As for) the statement of ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه): 'What a great innovation this is' when he gathered the people under one imam, then what he did was an innovation from a linguistic sense, since the continuous performance of the taraweeh prayer under one imam (from the beginning of Ramadan till its very end) did not occur in the time of the Prophet (ﷺ). Hence, he called it an innovation from a linguistic sense; otherwise, it is a Sunnah since the Prophet (ﷺ) performed it with the Companions for a few nights.'

The Salaf and the Imams of this religion held onto the rope of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ by continuing to establish taraweeh as they did.

Imam Malik رحمه الله says that if we come across two seemingly contradictory ahadith and if we know that Abu Bakr and 'Umar practiced one of them and left the other, then this would be proof enough for us for its authenticity. [Al-Ta'leeq al-Mumajjad]

Mulla Ali Qari رحمه الله states, "In the time of Umar, Uthman and Ali, the companions performed twenty rak'at taraweeh. For this reason, there is a consensus (Ijma) upon this amount". [Sharh Niqaya]

Imam Ibn Qudamah رحمه الله said, "The favoured view according to Abu Abdullah (i.e., Imam Ahmad), is that it is twenty rak'at. This was the view of al-Thawri, Abu Hanifah and al-Shafi'i. Malik said it is thirty-six." [al-Mughni]

Imam al-Nawawi رحمه الله said, "Taraweeh prayer is Sunnah according to scholarly consensus. Our view is that it is 20 rak'at with 10 taslims, and it is permissible to pray it individually or in congregation." [al-Majmu']

Imam al-Tirmidhi رحمه الله said, "Most of the scholars are of the view that what is narrated from Umar, Ali and other companions of the Prophet is twenty rak'at. This is the view of al-Thawri, Ibn al-Mubarak and al-Shafi'i. [Tirmidhi] If one claims to be a stronger adherent of the Sunnah than the author of Jami' at-Tirmidhi, then we need to relook into what we have learnt.

Imam al-Shafi'i رحمه الله said, "This is what I learned in our land, in Makkah they pray twenty raka'at."

We learn from all this that at the time of Umar رضي الله عنه, people were praying 20 raka'at in Madinah in the congregation. Likewise in the time of Ali Ibn Abi Talib رضي الله عنه in Kufah, the people prayed 20 raka'at in the congregation. This was then reported to have increased at the time of tabi'in to 39 or 41 raka'at on certain occasions. What our master, Umar did was that he increased the number to twenty to make the recitation in qiyam easier for the people so that they would bow and prostrate more.



An interesting point to note here. How did the people of Madinah reach the number 39? It came across because of a healthy rivalry between the people of Makkah and the people of Madinah. The people used to take a short break after every 4 raka'at in taraweeh. The people of Makkah wanting to do extra, said we will do a tawaf of the Ka'bah in every break and this is something only we can do. How did this work? The people of Makkah used to pray 4 raka'at, then perform tawaf around the Kabah 7 times, and then pray 2 more raka'at, except after the last 4 raka'at, after which they would perform Witr without any tawaf. This means there was a total of 4 sets of tawaf. Each set of tawaf was considered equivalent to 2 raka'at.

When the people of Madinah heard about this, they added 4 raka'at in the break and their total raka'at went up to 36. Add to it the witr and the final number came to 39 raka'at.

Imam al-Nawawi رحمه الله said. "The reason for this is that the people of Makkah used to perform tawaf between every tarweehah (i.e. 4 raka'at) and then pray 2 raka'at, and they would not perform tawaf after the 5th tarweehah. So, the people of Madinah desired to match them, so they made every tawaf equivalent to 4 raka'at." [al-Majmu']



Coming back to the main discussion. Imam Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله said, "It is proven that Ubayy ibn Ka'b (رضي الله عنه) used to lead the people in praying 20 raka'at in qiyam in Ramadan, and he used to pray Witr with 3 raka'at. Many scholars think that this is the Sunnah, because he established that among the Muhajirin and Ansar and no one objected to that. Others regarded it as mustahab to pray 39 rak'at, based on the fact that this was the practice of the people of Madinah in the past."

The Sheikh further explained, "When Ubayy ibn Ka'b led them in praying qiyam in a single congregation, he could not make them stand for too long, so he increased the number of raka'at to make up for the long standing. So they doubled the number of raka'at. He used to pray 11 or 13 raka'at of qiyam al-layl, then it seems that after that the people of Madinah found it difficult to stand for so long during the recitation, so they increased the number of raka'at until it reached 39." [Majmu' al-Fatawa]



What then about the Hadith of Aishah رضي الله عنها, where she said that the Prophet prayed only 11 raka'at?

Abu Salamah ibn 'Abd al-Rahman asked 'Aishah رضي الله عنها, "How did the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) pray during Ramadan?" She said: "He did not pray more than eleven rak'at in Ramadan or at other times. He would pray four, and do not ask how beautiful and long they were, then he would pray four, and do not ask how beautiful and long they were, then he would pray three. [Bukhari]

A few points with regard to this narration:

- From the wordings, it is also seen that she is referring to a prayer that is prayed both in and outside of Ramadan. Salat al-Taraweeh is restricted to Ramadan. Imams Malik, Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi and others all placed this narration from Aisha رضي الله عنها under the "Chapter of Tahajjud". Taraweeh and tahajjud are two separate and distinct prayers.
- Both Aishah and Abu Salamah were alive during the Caliphates of Umar, Uthman and Ali. It is said that the understanding of a narration is best taken from the one narrating it.



- If Aishah رضي الله عنها, and other companions had understood that the Prophet was referring to Salat al-Taraweeh to be 11 raka'at, then they would have corrected or advised Umar Ibn al-Khattab when he established twenty raka'at in congregation during his reign. So why did they not oppose or question this practice? This is because they understood the narration to refer to Salat al-Tahajjud which is also referred to as Salat al-Layl.
- Our mother Aishah رضي الله عنها mentioned only that which she saw during the night that was allocated to her. She spent only one night with the Prophet every 9 nights.
- From other narrations, we learn that the Prophet ﷺ is authentically reported to have also prayed 7, 9, 13, or even 17 raka'at at times. There was no fixed standard. Ibn Abbas was the nephew of the Prophet's wife, Maymunah رضي الله عنها. He had access to the Prophet's household at night. He narrated that the Prophet used to pray twenty raka'at by himself followed by Witr (every night) in the month of Ramadan. [Bayhaqi] The narration of 13 raka'at is also narrated by Aishah رضي الله عنها, herself. Based on this, it cannot be said that 11 raka'at was the Prophet's practice every day necessarily.



Some people misapplied the words of the Prophet ﷺ when he said, "Pray as you have seen me praying". This is meant to refer to the methodology or the actions that are done in salah. When the Prophet himself did not restrict the number of units or give a particular number, then using this hadith to make a claim becomes wrong.

Imam al-Shafi'i رحمه الله beautifully summarised the whole discussion and said: "There is no limit or restriction in the matter; it is a nafl (voluntary) prayer. If they lengthen their recitation and lessen the number of units, then that is good, and I prefer this. But if they increase the number of units, that is also fine." [Ma'rifat al-Sunan wal Athar]

Sheikh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله said, "If a person prays taraweeh according to the madhabs of Abu Hanifah, al-Shafi'i and Ahmad, with twenty raka'at, or according to the madhab of Malik, with thirty-six raka'at, or with thirteen or eleven raka'at, he has done well, as Imam Ahmad said, because there is nothing to specify the number. So the greater or lesser number of raka'at depends on how long or short the qiyam (standing in the prayer) is. [al-Ikhtiyarat]



From this we learn that the Prophet ﷺ often used to pray 11 raka'at and make them very lengthy, so much so that it used to take him most of the night. On one night in which the Prophet ﷺ led his companions in taraweeh, he kept praying until just before dawn, and the sahaba feared that they would miss suhoor. Later, the sahaba themselves increased the units and decreased the length of recitation in each unit to make it easy for the people to pray taraweeh.

As per the Hanabilah, praying taraweeh in congregation is more virtuous than praying it alone. But if one was to pray it alone, then that is also valid especially if it is being done to enhance once connection with the Book of Allah or for the tarbiyah of his family. Imam Ahmad was asked about the one who wants to delay the taraweeh until the last part of the night. He replied, "Praying with the Muslims in congregation is more beloved to me."

Imam Hasan al-Basri رحمه الله was asked by a person, "Do I pray taraweeh in the house or in the masjid?." He replied, "At a place where your eyes are able to shed tears and your heart easier to soften and humble, so hold onto that place."





Breaking Away From the Congregation After 8 Raka'at

In the blessed month of Ramadan, it makes no sense for people to be arguing or fighting over issues that are a matter of scholarly differences or make them the cause of division and fitnah among Muslims. The teacher of our teachers, Sheikh Ibn al-Uthaymin رحمه الله, commented on the issue of people praying ten raka'at with the Imam, then sitting down and waiting for Witr instead of completing the taraweeh prayers with the Imam. He said,

"It grieves us deeply that we find in the Muslim ummah a group which differs concerning matters in which differences of opinion are acceptable, and they take these differences as a means to cause division. Differences within the ummah existed at the time of the sahaba, yet they remained united. The youth in particular and all those who are committed to Islam must remain united because they have enemies who are laying in wait." [al-Sharh al-Mumti']

What did these people miss out by breaking away from the Imam? A huge reward.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Whoever stands with the Imam until he finishes, it is equivalent to spending the whole night in prayer." [Tirmidhi] The one who left midway, before the Imam has completed his prayer, gets rewarded only what he has prayed and misses out on being recorded as those who spent the entire night in prayer.

In many masajid today we see that the Imam changes after 10 raka'at. Can one leave after 10 raka'at and does this fulfil the requirement for attaining rewards as mentioned in the above hadith? No. Our Sheikh Ibrahim Nuhu حفظه الله said, "What we understand from this hadith is that the Prophet was talking about the end of the prayer and not the Imam himself.

The Imam is there to facilitate the prayer and the second Imam is there to make it easy for the first Imam. It is considered as one prayer, even if the Imams change and not two different prayers. When the first Imam changes, no one says that the prayer has finished. Rather, the second Imam replaces him and completes the taraweeh. This is the best and safest opinion for a person to follow."



Sheikh Saleh al-Fawzan حفظه الله mentioned while commenting on Sheikh al-Islam's statement concerning al-Taraweeh, "Whoever thinks that the standing in prayer in Ramadan has a specified number from the Prophet ﷺ, which is not to be increased upon or decreased from has without doubt erred.

This is clear, and it is not befitting to have discord concerning these issues, to such an extent that some of them say that increasing upon eleven or thirteen raka'at is a bid'ah! Then this means that Umar and the Companions practiced bid'ah.

The Prophet ﷺ did not specify the number of raka'at for al-Taraweeh. Rather, he stated: "Whoever stands in prayer in Ramadan out of faith and seeking the reward (for such) will have his preceding sins forgiven. And he said: "Whoever stand in prayer with the Imam until he finishes and leaves the prayer will have an entire night in of prayer written for him."

He ﷺ did not specify, and harshness in this issue and the absence of understanding theses issues is what causes reckless speech. The Prophet ﷺ stated: "It is obligatory upon you to adhere to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the Righteous Caliphs.' And Umar is the second Caliph and the Companions along with him prayed 23 raka'at in the Masjid of the Prophet ﷺ." [Sharh Akhsar al-Mukhtasarat]

What's worse is when those who break away from the congregation look down upon those praying the complete 20 raka'at or worse label them as innovators. SubhanAllah! When there is a level of scholarly difference of opinion among the scholars, rather Imams of this Ummah, then it does not befit the layman to blame another layman from following the opinion of established scholars. They cannot be blamed of indulging in innovations or going against the Sunnah. Why?

Imam Sufyan al-Thawri رحمه الله said, "As for the issues about which the jurists differed: I do not denounce any of my brothers from acting on them." [Al-Faqih wal-Mutafaqih]

Imam Ibn al-Qudamah رحمه الله said, "No one should denounce anyone for following his madhab, for there is no denunciation with regard to issues that are subject to ijtihad." [Adab al-Shar'iyyah]

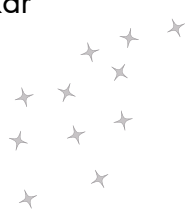
Imam al-Nawawi رحمه الله said, "The scholars only denounce (if someone opposes) what the nation is agreed upon, as for the issues upon which they differed - there is no denunciation on those issues." [Sharh Nawawi]



Imam Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله wrote, "Whoever adopts a view by being a muqallid to someone, cannot rebuke one who takes another view due to being a muqallid to someone else. But if one of them does have a conclusive shari'ah proof, it is required to comply with it when it becomes known. It is not lawful for anyone to say that one view is preferable to another, without proof; nor be biased to one opinion over another – or one person over another – without a definitive proof.

Instead, one who is a muqallid is obliged to follow a qualified scholar: he cannot evaluate, weigh-up, or say something is right or wrong ... As for someone who only knows the opinion of one scholar and his proofs, but does not know the other scholar's opinion or proofs, he is from the generality of the muqallids. He is not of the scholars who are able to evaluate or weigh-up (proofs). [Majmu' al-Fatawa]

Our Sheikh Ibrahim Nuhu حفظه الله said, "Enjoining good and forbidding evil can be done only by a person who has knowledge. Having knowledge doesn't necessitate that a person must be a scholar. Every Muslim must do it as long as they have knowledge regarding that matter. The person must be sure that the ma'aruf being propagated is actually ma'aruf and the munkar being spoken against is actually munkar.



A person must be careful of the difference of opinion regarding Munkar. Not every difference is a valid difference. The difference spoken about here is when the proofs being presented are strong on both the sides without following desires. Instead of passing a ruling on one another, the opposing side needs to be explained with the proofs that the case they believe in is a munkar. [Sharh Riyadhhus Saliheen]



Reading From The Mushaf in Prayer

Those of us who have not memorized the Quran, especially if one is praying the taraweeh at home or leading their families at home, can hold the mushaf while reciting. If one is praying in congregation, it is best to not do so and focus on the Imam's recitation.

Imam Malik رحمه الله disliked holding the mushaf in the obligatory prayers, but allowed it in Ramadan saying: There is no harm if a person were to lead people from the Mushaf in voluntary prayers in Ramadan. [al-Mudawwanah] This is similar to what has been reported from Imam Ahmad رحمه الله who allowed it for voluntary prayers in Ramadan, and disliked it in obligatory prayers. [Masail Abi Dawud]

Imam al-Bukhari رحمه الله mentions that our mother, Aishah رضي الله عنها, had a slave who would lead her in Ramadan reading from the Mushaf.

Anas would lead the prayer and have one person behind him hold the Mushaf, so that if he ever forgot, he would be reminded by that person. This act was reported from among the tabi'in like Muhammad ibn Sireen, Aishah bint Talha, al-Zuhri, al-Hasan al-Basri, 'Ataa, and Yahya ibn Sa'eed al-Ansari who allowed it.





Praying Taraweeh at Home

Imam al-Nawawi رحمه الله said, "Praying taraweeh is Sunnah according to scholarly consensus. It is permissible to offer this prayer alone or in congregation, but which is better? There are two well-known opinions on this matter. The correct view according to the consensus of our companions is that praying it in congregation is better. The second view is that it is better to pray it individually.

Our companions said: The difference of opinion has to do with one who has memorized the Qur'an; there is no fear that he may become lazy and neglect it if he prays on his own, and the congregation in the mosque is not going to be affected if he stays away. But if one of these factors is absent, then praying in congregation is better, and there is no difference of scholarly opinion on this point." [al-Majmu']

Without a doubt, praying taraweeh in the masjid is better. In the narrations from the Prophet, we see him mentioning about rewards that a person gets after staying till the end with the Imam etc. That being said, there is the other side of the coin that also needs to be taken into consideration. Why?

Because the Prophet ﷺ also prayed at home. Imam Ibn Abi Shaybah relates that Ibn Umar, his son Salim, Qasim bin Muhammad, 'Alqamah, and Ibrahim al-Nakha'i used to pray individually instead of in congregation. Imam Malik, Abu Yusuf and some of the Shafi'i scholars held to this position. Imam Ibn 'Abd al-Barr relates this position from Imam al-Shafi'i himself.

Imam al-Muzani رحمه الله said, "He (i.e Imam al-Shafi'i) said, "With respect to standing (in prayer) during the month of Ramadan (i.e. taraweeh), the prayer of one praying alone is better according to me." [Mukhtasar al-Muzani]

According to the Maliki scholars, it is recommended to pray taraweeh at home as long as the masjid are not abandoned and the individual will pray it at home and not skip it

Also, Zaid bin Thabit رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, "Pray in your homes. Verily the prayer of a person in his home is more virtuous than in the mosque except for the prescribed prayers."



As per the Hanabilah, praying taraweeh in congregation is more virtuous than praying it alone. But if one was to pray it alone, then that is also valid especially if it is being done to enhance one's connection with the Book of Allah or for the tarbiyah of his family. Imam Ahmad was asked about the one who wants to delay the taraweeh until the last part of the night. He replied, "Praying with the Muslims in congregation is more beloved to me."

A person should take this option only if they know for sure that they will not become lax with regards to the taraweeh, they want to stand in qiyam longer than the congregation, they want to recite with more focus, or similar. Especially in our times today, it is best that we pray with the congregation. The hearts need to be connected with the masjid and the community.

End of the day, the simple answer is as was summarised by Imam Hasan. Imam Hasan al-Basri رحمه الله was asked by a person, "Do I pray taraweeh in the house or in the masjid?." He replied, "At a place where your eyes are able to shed tears and your heart easier to soften and humble, so hold onto that place."





Summary

- The Prophet ﷺ prayed 8 raka'at plus 3 witr in the few times that he prayed publicly. Umar also started off the united congregation with 8 raka'at plus 3 witr. Later on, he made it 20 raka'at plus 3 witr. The difference here was that the standing was shorter, had more prostrations, and the aim was to make it easy for the people.
- There is no fixed number of raka'at for taraweeh. No scholar in our history has said that praying 8 or 20 is an obligation. How can it be said, when the prayer itself is a nafil prayer. What the scholars debate at times is on what is the best number to pray. The Hanafi, Shafi'i and Hanbali schools say 20 is the best as this was the established practice for Umar and none of the sahaba opposed it. The Malikis say 36 is best because that was the practice of the People of Madinah for over a century.

- A person prays how much ever they are able to pray in units of 2. It is very simple. There is no fixed number of raka'at for taraweeh. No scholar in our history has said that praying 8 or 20 is an obligation. How can it be said, when the prayer itself is a nafil prayer. What the scholars debate at times is on what is the best number to pray. The Hanafi, Shafi'i and Hanbali schools say 20 is the best as this was the established practice fo Umar and none of the sahaba opposed it. The Malikis say 36 is best because that was the practice of the People of Madinah for over a century.
- A person prays how much ever they are able to pray in units of 2. It is very simple. To navigate the differences of opinion, we can follow Imam Malik رحمه الله. It is mentioned that the practice of Imam Malik was to pray 8 raka'at at home in accordance to the personal practice of the Prophet ﷺ, while the Imam lead people in congregation of either 20 or 36 raka'at for ease of the community in accordance with the established practice of the sahaba.



- Stay with the Imam till the end of the salah. If you want to leave early, then find a masjid that prays lesser units or pray at home. Don't break away from the congregation midway as one is missing out on many rewards and also causing fitna among the community.
- Don't waste time and energy in Ramadan arguing over unnecessary matters. The arguing might end up reducing from the rewards of the acts of worship that we are doing.





10 Super Deeds for 10 Super Nights

The best of days are the days of Dhul Hijjah. The best of nights are the nights of Ramadan and the best of those is the Night of Power aka Laylatul Qadr. It is up to us that we make the most of the last 10 nights of Ramadan so that we don't miss out on Laylatul Qadr which is equal to 1000 months and more. Allah says,

لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ

The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. [Surah al-Qadr, 3]

Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه relates that the Prophet ﷺ said: "Whoever stands (in the voluntary night prayer of) Ramadan out of faith and in the hope of reward, his previous sins will be forgiven. And whoever spends the night of Lailat al-Qadr in prayer out of faith and in the hope of reward, his previous sins will be forgiven." [Nasai]

Even if the start of our Ramadan hasn't been how we had hoped for, now is the time to change that.

Imam Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله said: "The lesson lies in the perfection of the conclusion of a thing, not in the shortcomings of the beginning of it."

Imam Hasan al-Basri رحمه الله said "Improve your performance in what is left (of time) and you will be forgiven for that which has already passed. So take special care of the time you have left because you do not know when your soul will be turned over to Allah's Mercy."

Sheikh Abdul Aziz al-Tarefe حفظه الله said, "The one who lags behind in the beginning of Ramadan but does well towards its end is better than the one who does well in it's beginning but lags behind towards its end. It is mentioned in the hadeeth, "Indeed, the (result of) deeds depend upon their endings."

Let's see what we can do to maximise our benefits:

Intention: This is by far the best "hack" there is. We hear the famous hadith narrated everywhere. Umar رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Verily, deeds are only with intentions. Verily, every person will have only what they intended...." [Bukhari]



It is said that some of the salaf used to pause a bit in the marketplace before buying stuff just so that they could make their intention such that they get rewarded for it. No matter how small a deed, make an intention of doing it for the sake of Allah. Like if you enter the masjid, make the intention of doing i'tikaf. Having some deeds of i'tikaf are better than having none.

Charity: Give charity no matter how small every day so if it coincides with the Night of Power it will by the will of Allah be equivalent to giving charity for a 1000 months and more. Some categories of the community like students may not have money to give. Our Prophet ﷺ says that the best of charity is giving water to a person. We could fill bottles of water and give it out to people stuck in traffic during iftar. We intend to get the reward of both helping a fasting person break their fast as well as giving water to a thirsty person. It all boils down to what you intend.

Imam Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله said, "The Prophet ﷺ was the most generous of people, and he was at his most generous in Ramadan, when he would give a great deal of charity, do good deeds, read Qur'an, remember Allah (dhikr) and observe i'tikaf." [Zaad al-Ma'ad]



The Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever gives food to a fasting person with which to break his fast, will have a reward equal to his, without it detracting in the slightest from the reward of the fasting person." [Ibn Majah]

Narrated Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه: The Prophet ﷺ was the most generous of all the people, and he used to become more generous in Ramadan when Jibreel met him. Jibreel used to meet him every night during Ramadan to revise the Qur'an with him. Allah's Messenger ﷺ then used to be more generous than the fast wind. [Bukhari]

Our scholars say that combining fasting with feeding the poor is one of the best means of reaching Jannah. Why? The Prophet ﷺ said, "In Jannah, there are rooms whose outside can be seen from the inside and the inside can be seen from the outside. Allah has prepared them for those who feed the poor, who are gentle in speech, who fast regularly and who pray at night when people are asleep." [Ahmad]

A major problem in the mindset of many of us is that we give our leftovers, the unwanted, or that which is spoilt to charity. Nowadays the plight of refugees is very bad and it's saddening to see that many of us give old tattered clothes and expired food to our brothers and sisters.



This is contrary to the Sunnah. Our beloved Prophet ﷺ taught us an important principle to follow which states:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ طَيِّبٌ لَا يَقْبَلُ إِلَّا طَيِّبًا – Allah is pure and he accepts only what is pure.

How can we give something for the sake of Allah that we ourselves detest and think it will be accepted by Allah? Our mother Aisha رضي الله عنها was called Umm al-Teeb because she used to spray perfume on the money she donated. When asked why she did this, she explained that charity reaches Allah before the receiving person's hand so she wanted it to smell nice.

Post Fajr: Stay back after Fajr salah till 15 minutes after Ishraq (sunrise) remembering Allah and then pray 2 raka'at. Wallahi this doesn't require much work or effort but look at the mercy of Allah for us. The rewards are just mind-bogglingly huge. This is a time when we can increase in making Ishtighfar and making dua for our parents. We can show up 15 minutes earlier before the adhan and make sure we pray tahajjud along with the Witr so we can get the reward of praying such for 83 years or more.



Anas رضي الله عنه said that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever prays Fajr in congregation then sits remembering Allah until the sun rises, then prays two rak'ahs, will have a reward like that of Hajj and 'Umrah." He said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "In full, in full, in full." [Tirmidhi]

Scholars say that women can do the same in their houses and get the exact same reward. Still, we have feminists asking for equality in Islam. Allahul Musta'an! Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "The angels send blessings upon one of you so long as he is in his prayer-place where he offered his prayer, so long as he does not break his wudhu; they say: 'O Allah forgive him, O Allah have mercy on him. [Bukhari]

Reading Qur'an: Even if you can't sit and read the Qur'an properly, keep reciting what you remember. Don't put it off till when you are free. We don't have the luxury of time to miss out on this chance. Every letter, not word but every letter gets 10 rewards. In the month of Ramadan, rewards are multiplied even more.



The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever reads a letter from the Book of Allah will receive a hasanah (good deed) from it (i.e. his recitation), and the hasanah is multiplied by ten. I do not say that Alif-Laam-Meem is (considered as) a letter, rather Alif is a letter, Laam is a letter, and Meem is a letter." [Tirmidhi] It is important to note that your tongue should move while reciting and you should not merely recite in your mind as the rewards are for reciting it properly.

Increase in sending Salawat upon the Prophet of Allah ﷺ: We did not get to meet the Prophet ﷺ in this lifetime but we are told by the Prophet ﷺ that, "Allah has angels who go around on earth, conveying to me the salam of my ummah." [Nasai]. Not only will our salam reach him but he ﷺ will return our salaam. Ya Salam Ya Salam!

Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "There is not one of you who sends his greetings upon me except that Allah returns the soul to my body (in the grave) and I return his greeting." [Abu Dawud]



More importantly we have another narration that states, "Whoever supplicates Allah to exalt my mention (i.e., send salah), Allah will exalt his mention (i.e., send salah) ten times and remove from him ten sins and raise him ten degrees." [Muslim] Imagine this in Ramadan or on the Night of Power where its multiplied such that doing the mental maths would make your head spin.

Keep your tongue moist by increasing in dua and dhikr: Allah says: je te

"Men and women who remember Allah much: Allah has prepared forgiveness for them and an immense reward," [Surah al-Ahzab, 35]

Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "There are two statements that are light for the tongue to remember, heavy in the Scales and are dear to the Merciful: 'Subhan-Allahi wa bihamdihi' (سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ) - Glorified is Allah and praised is He, Glorified is Allah the Most Great..' [Bukhari]. In other places, it is reported that the best of dhikr is "Lallahallallah"

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "There are three types of people whose supplication is answered: the fasting person's Dua, the oppressed one's Dua and the Dua of the traveller."



How amazing is the situation of a believer! Imam Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali رحمه الله said: "The fasting person is in a state of worship both during his night and his day. And his supplication is answered both during his fasting and when he breaks his fast. During his day he is fasting and steadfastly patient, and during his night he is eating and grateful." [Lataif al-Ma'arif]

This has got to be by far the easiest of deeds that we can do. We can do it while we are busy, standing, sitting, wherever we are and it doesn't even require us to be in a state of ablution.

Imam Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله said, "The best of those who fast are those who remember Allah the most in their fast." [al-Wabil as-Sayyib]

Pray Isha and Fajr in Jama'a (congregation): Why? It constitutes praying the whole night. It doesn't need saying but we, especially the men should be praying all five daily prayers in the congregation in the masjid. But for those who are busy, have certain responsibilities to take care of, and cannot make it for the Ramadan Qiyam al-Layl which includes taraweeh and tahajjud etc even after trying, then this "hack" is a blessing indeed.



It is narrated from Uthman رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever prays Isha in the congregation, it is as if he spent half the night in prayer, and whoever prays Fajr in congregation, it is as if he spent the whole night in prayer." [Muslim]

The remaining deeds are what I'd like to call sadaqah jariyah (continuous charity) deeds. We try doing them these 10 days looking for rewards but hopefully, these deeds continue to reap rewards for us even after Ramadan ends.

Donate/Gift a Quran or beneficial books to various Masajid: Gifting beneficial books and Quran to the masjid and institutes can have great rewards. Every time someone reads them or benefits from them we can get the reward. Something as small as Fortress of the Muslim can also reap immense rewards.

Sponsor food for Orphans: Narrations about the virtues of looking after and taking care of orphans fill up libraries worth of books. Iftar parties are galore in Ramadan. We could invite a few orphans over so that they also feel that sense of family during Ramadan. If that's not possible then we can make sure that we can send food every day. It's the quality that matters, not the quantity. What's to keep in mind as I mentioned before is that this is a sadaqah jariyah deed.



So our aim is not to just help in the 10 days but even after that. Inviting them to your place could open the heart of someone to adopt or even sponsor the education of some of the orphans.

Many of those who attained success, Imams from the Salaf used to prefer the poor over themselves when serving food at the time of iftar. This was seen as the practice of Ibn Umar, Malik ibn Dinar, Ahmad ibn Hanbal and others. It is even said that Ibn Umar رضي الله عنهم would not break his fast unless there were orphans and poor people with him.

Serving Parents: This is a no-brainer and is something we should be doing without fail irrespective of Ramadan or not. The point here is to increase in servitude to them in the last 10 days. Bring them water, massage their feet at the end of the day after taraweeh, and ask them to make dua for you. Throughout the Quran, we see that obedience to Allah is immediately followed by doing good and obedience to parents. This shows their high station. Imagine on the Day of Judgment finding your book of deeds filled with 1000 months plus worth of servitude to your parents. They are a door to Jannah in this world. Do the most of it while you can, many others are not that lucky.



Some might be living away from their parents. They can call them up and lift their spirits, make them laugh, share some beneficial information with them, send gifts, help with work over the Internet, or in whatever capacity they can to make their parents happy.

This does NOT however mean that we do deeds in these 10 nights hoping to get the reward for 83 years worth of worship or more and then do nothing for 83 years. That's NOT how this works. This is something we need to be doing on a daily basis. Also, as was stated earlier, these things are not restricted to just these last 10 days of Ramadan. We should strive to make them a part of our daily routines as well so we can maximise our rewards and increase our chances of attaining Allah's Mercy and reaching Jannah.

رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

"Our Lord, accept (this) from us. Indeed You are the Hearing, the Knowing." [Surah Baqarah, 127]



I'tikaf

I'tikaf is a highly recommended Sunnah. Allah says,

وَعَهَدْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَن طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ
وَالْعَاكِفِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ

...and We commanded Ibrahim and Isma'il that they should purify My House (the Ka'bah) for those who are doing tawaf, or staying (I'tikaf), or bowing or prostrating themselves. [Surah al-Baqarah, 187]

وَلَا تُبَشِّرُوهُنَّ وَأَنْتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ

Do not be intimate with your spouses while you are in I'tikaf in the masajid. [Surah al-Baqarah, 187]

I'tikaf linguistically means to be attached to something. Allah showcases the linguistic usage in the Qur'an,

وَجَاوَزْنَا بِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْبَحْرَ فَأَتَوْا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ يَعْكُفُونَ عَلَىٰ
أَصْنَامٍ لَهُمْ

And We took the Children of Israel across the sea; then they came upon a people intent in devotion (يَعْكُفُونَ) to (some) idols of theirs. [Surah al-A'araf, 138]

As per the Shariah, it refers to a devotional state where the person doesn't require ghusl. The person is of sound mind even if below the age of discernment. Their devotion to the masjid for the purpose of worshipping Allah.



Where Is I'tikaf Done?

A person should observe their I'tikaf in a masjid where the daily congregational prayers and the Friday prayers are held. Imam Ibn Qudamah رحمه الله said, I'tikaf observed anywhere but in a masjid is not valid if the person observing i'tikaaf is a man. We do not know of any difference among the scholars concerning this." [al-Mughni] The place where the I'tikaf is being done in the masjid has to be a place which is meant for prayer. The basic principle is that whatever is within the walls of the masjid and has a door into the masjid comes under the same rulings as the masjid. This also includes the masjid courtyard.

Likewise for women, the safest opinion is that her I'tikaf also has to be in a masjid and not in the "masjid" of her home. It is also not necessary for her to be in a masjid that observes all congregational and Friday prayers as that is not obligatory upon her anyways. If I'tikaf was permissible to be observed at home, the Prophet's wives رضي الله عنهم would have done that at least once. Their I'tikaf was always in the masjid. Another important point to remember is that it is not permissible for a woman to observe voluntary i'tikaf without her husband's permission as this is a sunnah action and her taking care of his rights takes precedence over this action.

Imam al-Nawawi said, "It is not valid for men or women to observe I'tikaf anywhere but in the mosque; it is not valid in the mosque of a woman's house or the mosque of a man's house, which is a space that is set aside for prayer." [al-Majmu']

Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه who asked about a woman who vowed to observe i'tikaf in the masjid of her house. He said, "(This is) an innovation, and the most hateful of actions to Allah are innovations (bid'ah)."

The best places for I'tikaf are Masjid al-Haram in Makkah, Masjid al-Nabawi in Madinah, Masjid al-Aqsa in Jerusalem. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"Offering prayer in my masjid (in Madinah) is better than one thousand prayers elsewhere, save for those offered prayer in al-Masjid al-Haram (in Makkah). And prayer offered in al-Masjid al-Haram is better than prayer offered in my mosque by one hundred prayers." [Ahmad]

A handful of scholars misunderstood and claimed that I'tikaf can be done only in the 3 masajid of al-Masjid al-Haram (in Makkah), al-Masjid al-Nabawi (in Madinah) and al-Masjid al-Aqsa (in Jerusalem).

This is incorrect. The ayah in which Allah mentions about I'tikaf is general and that includes all masajid where a congregation is established. Imam al-Bukhari رحمه الله titled a Chapter in his Sahih as: I'tikaf during the last ten days and i'tikaf in any masjid. What can be said instead is as we stated above, the best I'tikaf is in these three masajid.



Duration of I'tikaf

For a person intending to do I'tikaf for 10 days, majority of the scholars are of the view that the person should enter their place of i'tikaf before the sun sets on the night of the twenty-first. It is important to remember that the period of i'tikaf is counted by the nights and not the days. The last ten nights start with the twenty-first. A person completes their i'tikaf and should come out when the sun sets on the last day of Ramadan.

I'tikaf doesn't need to be for only 10 days. It can be done at any time and in any month, but the best is in Ramadan, and even here the best is in the last 10 nights.

Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri رضي الله عنه said, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ observed i'tikaf during the first ten days of Ramadan, then he observed i'tikaf during the middle ten days in a small tent at the door of which was a reed mat. He took the mat in his hand and lifted it. Then he put his head out and spoke to the people, and they came close to him. He said, 'I observed i'tikaf during the first ten days seeking this night, then I observed i'tikaf during the middle ten days. Then someone came and said to me that it is in the last ten days, so whoever among you wishes to observe i'tikaf let him do so.' So the people observed i'tikaf with him." [Muslim]

The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have done I'tikaf even in the starting days of Shawwal. In one of the last years before he ﷺ returned to Allah, he did I'tikaf for 20 days. The best I'tikaf is in the last 10 nights of Ramadan.

I'tikaf can be even for an hour or less. Some scholars like Imam Abu Hanifa opined that the minimum duration for I'tikaf is 1 day. There is no fixed time mentioned in the Sunnah and there is flexibility in the matter InshaAllah.

The Hanbali and the Shafi'i scholars say that it is recommended (mustahab) that if someone is going to spend a decent time in the masjid, they then intend to do i'tikaf. What is considered a decent amount of time as per the urf is what is ok to intend I'tikaf in. This could be just a few minutes as well.

It is important to remember that I'tikaf is not valid without an intention.

A person needs to intend that they are entering the state of I'tikaf even if its for a small period of time after the obligatory prayers. Imam al-Bukhari رحمه الله narrated that Umar ibn al-Khattab رضي الله عنه vowed to spend one night in i'tikaf in Masjid al-Haraam, and the Prophet ﷺ told him to fulfil his vow.



Ya'la ibn Umayyah said, "I secluded myself in the masjid for some time for l'tikaf." 'Ata رحمه الله told him, "That is l'tikaf, as long as you secluded yourself there."

Imam al-Nawawi رحمه الله said, "With regard to the minimum length of time for l'tikaf , the majority stipulated that it must be observed in the mosque, and that it is permissible to do a lot or a little, even an hour or a moment." [al-Majmu']





While In I'tikaf

One does not exit from the I'tikaf that one has vowed to perform consecutively except for something unavoidable like using the toilet, getting food etc. For one who has made a vow, the I'tikaf becomes wajib instead of just Sunnah. Such a person does not visit the sick, nor attend a funeral unless it was stipulated though such a stipulation is not valid. The person does not exit for the sake of trade or whenever he so desires without a dire necessity.

Aishah رضي الله عنها said, "The Sunnah for the mu'takif is not to visit any sick person, or attend any funeral, or touch or be intimate with any woman, or go out for any reason except those which cannot be avoided." [Abu Dawud]

Intercourse is not permitted as it spoils the i'tikaf. So does ejaculation from foreplay or masturbation. A condition for I'tikaf is that one is free from anything that requires performing the purificatory bath like being in a state of janabah, menstruation or lochia etc.

A person who is performing the sunnah I'tikaf can leave the Masjid as and when required like a job, exam, appointments or its likes. The person can return to the masjid when the work is done.

It is recommended to busy oneself with acts of worship and to avoid whatever does not concern one like debating, arguing, backbiting and frequent speech. I'tikaf is not a time for socializing but rather a time for secluding oneself with Allah. Try and vary your good deeds and have a plan on what you want to do and achieve.

A person should take care of their hygiene also while in I'tikaf. Combing and cutting one's hair, clipping one's nails, cleaning one's body, wearing nice clothes or wearing perfume are all permissible. Our mother, Aishah رضي الله عنها reported, "The Prophet ﷺ was performing I'tikaf and he would put his head out through the opening to my room and I would clean (or comb in one narration) his hair. I was menstruating at the time." [Bukhari]

As Muslims, we need to revive the Sunnah of I'tikaf. We see so many people for taraweeh but not even a fraction of that for I'tikaf. Imam Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri رحمه الله said, "It is strange that the Muslims have given up i'tikaf when the Prophet ﷺ did not give it up from the time he entered Madinah until Allah took him (in death).



Making Up Pending Fasts from Last Ramadan

Whoever has missed the days of Ramadan, needs to make up for it. It is preferred to do so immediately and in a consecutive manner. This is because the fasts of Ramadan are done consecutively. Since it is an obligation to be made up, it is best to fulfil it as soon as possible. The fasts are made up in this manner irrespective if the fast was missed/invalidated by a valid or invalid reason.

- It is impermissible to delay it till the next Ramadan without a valid excuse. It was narrated that 'Aishah رضي الله عنها said: "I would own fasts from Ramadan and I would not make them up until Shaban came." [Nasai]
- A person has to be determined to make up the fast and cannot be negligent about it. If so, it must be made up and the person needs to feed a poor person for each day that is pending. The expiation is 1 mudd of wheat or 1/2 sa'a of dates or any staple food. If the delay is because of a legitimate excuse, then the expiation of feeding isn't required.



- If a person is to pass away, then food is to be given on their behalf. If the person has delayed their fast because of a valid reason and passes away in this scenario, then the expiation is waived. The cost of the expiation is taken from the person's estate/inheritance. If money is insufficient, then it is recommended that the heirs do so on the behalf of their benefactor.

Narrated Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه: A man came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said, "O Allah's Messenger (ﷺ)! My mother died and she ought to have fasted one month (for her missed Ramadan). Shall I fast on her behalf?" The Prophet (ﷺ) replied in the affirmative and said, "Allah's debts have more right to be paid." [Bukhari]



Zakat al-Fitr

What is Zakat al-Fitr?

The term Zakat al-Fitr is comprised of two words - 'Zakat' means growth and purification and al-Fitr comes from the word إفطار or breaking the fast.

Zakat al-Fitr or Sadaqah al-Fitr is of the two obligatory charities enjoined upon Muslims. The other is Zakat al-Maal for those who meet the relevant conditions. Zakat al-Fitr was legislated with the fasting of Ramadan in 2 AH just two days before Eid. Based on this, we understand that Zakat al-Fitr was actually legislated before Zakat al-Maal.

Sheikh Zafar al-Hasan حفظه الله highlights that one of the reasons behind its name is that it becomes obligatory immediately after the last iftar of Ramadan. It could be paid in advance but its only after the last iftar that it becomes an obligation upon the people. We know the night of Eid by the occurrence of one of two things:

1. We have fasted the complete thirty days of Ramadan. Hence, the night of Eid is after sunset on that day.
2. By sighting the new moon on the 30th night, in which case (what would have been) the thirtieth night would be the night of Eid. It is important to remember that in the Islamic calendar, the night comes before the day.

It is an obligation upon every Muslim to pay this Zakat to show gratitude to Allah for allowing us to fast and experience the blessed month of Ramadan and also to make up for any shortcomings that we might have had while fasting. It is also to make sure that everyone is taken care of on the Day of Eid. Those who have enough food for themselves and their families on the eve of Eid are obliged to pay it.

Imam Wakee' ibn al-Jarrah رحمه الله said, "The parable of Zakat al-Fitr is to the (blessed month) month of Ramadan like the prostration of forgetfulness is to prayer. Zakat al-Fitr makes up for deficiencies in fasting just as the prostration (of forgetfulness) makes up for deficiencies in prayer." [Tareekh Baghdad]

Imam Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali رحمه الله mentioned the following while discussing the end of the month of Ramadan, "Umar ibn Abdul Aziz wrote to the major cities commanding them to conclude Ramadan with seeking forgiveness and charity - meaning the Zakat al-Fitr. For the Zakat al-Fitr serves as a purification for the fasting person from whatever vile language or actions he may have done, while seeking forgiveness serves to repair what vile language and actions ate away of the fast. [Lataif al-Ma'arif]



Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz رحمه الله said: "He (the Prophet ﷺ) paid Zakat al-Fitr then he went out for the prayer – i.e., Salat al-Eid." [Ahkam al-Qur'an]

Allah says,

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى

"He has certainly succeeded who purifies himself and mentions the name of his Lord and prays"
[Surah al-A'laa, 14-15]

Purifying here refers to purifying the soul of the one who has fasted the month of Ramadan. Amongst the zakat to be paid is zakat al-fitr. Zakat al-Fitr is usually placed at the end of the chapter of zakat in books of fiqh as it is not compulsory on one's wealth and nor is it related to one's wealth in the first place. It is related to the person themselves.

Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه narrated, 'The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) enjoined Zakat al-Fitr on the one who fasts (Ramadan) to purify him from any indecent act or speech and for the purpose of providing food for the needy. It is accepted as Zakat for the person who pays it before the Eid prayer and it is sadaqah for the person who pays it after the Eid prayer.'
[Abu Dawud]



We also give Zakat al-Fitr to be thankful to Allah for being able to witness and complete the blessed month of Ramadan. The Prophet ﷺ made Zakat al-Fitr more general and did not restrict it to only those that were able to fast.

The obligation of zakat al-fitr is reported as a consensus by Imams al-Mundhir, al-Nawawi, Ibn Qudamah, and Ibn Hazm among many others.





Whom Does it Benefit?

This Zakat is given so that the poor and the needy in our communities so that they can also enjoy and celebrate Eid.

It is recommended and not obligatory to give Zakat Al-Fitr for the foetus in the mothers womb.

Zakat al-Fitr may be given to the eight categories of people to whom Zakat al-Maal may be given. This is the opinion of the majority of the scholars. According to the Maliki madhab, one of the opinions of Imam Ahmad and the opinion of Imam Ibn Taymiyyah is that it should be given exclusively to the poor and needy.

A poor person is classified as one who does not have enough money to satisfy his basic needs.

Another important point to remember is that it is not permissible for the one who gives Zakat al-Fitr to buy it back from the one to whom he has given it. This would become a form of business that is based on deception and cheating Allah.

It is not permissible to give it to anyone except a needy Muslim. This ruled out non-Muslims. They can be helped with normal sadaqah funds instead if there is need.

It is not permissible to zakat al-fitr to those on whom one is obliged to spend as they should be getting taken care of anyways in the first place by this person. An easy rule of the thumb to understand this is - You have to spend on them if you would inherit from them. If you would inherit from them then it is not permissible to give them zakat, but if you would not inherit from them then there is nothing wrong with giving them zakat.

Or in even simpler terms, Sheikh Ibn al-Uthaymeen رحمه الله explains, "The basic principle in our view is that it is essential that the one who spends be an heir of the one on whom he spends, except for direct ascendants and descendants, in which case the issue of inheritance is not a condition. [al-Sharh al-Mumti']

Imam al-Nawawi رحمه الله said, "If a child is wealthy, his financial maintenance and Zakat Al-Fitr are due on him from his wealth and it is neither due upon his father nor grandfather. This opinion was adopted by Abu Hanifa, Muhammad (ibn Al-Hasan), Ahmad and Ishaq."

Salah and Zakat are mentioned multiple times throughout the Quran. One of the pearls of wisdom that scholars mention is that this is because it combines the inward state of a person in salah as well as the outward state of a person in zakat.



In salah, a person's sincerity, obedience, commitment, and love for Allah are seen. In zakat, a person's sincerity, obedience, commitment, and love for carrying out the commands of Allah are seen. Along with this, salah brings the community together.

Salah and the Masjid form the backbone of the community. Zakat empowers and uplifts the weaker sections of society. One way to look at it is that, if we are not connected with the Masjid and our salah in the congregation, we wouldn't know the condition of our society and who would need our support and zakat. One of the hardest part of Zakat al-Fitr and what makes it such an honourable act of worship is for one to know the poor of the community who need food.



Who Needs to Pay it?

Narrated Ibn Umar رضي الله عنهم that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) enjoined the payment of one Sa' of dates or one Sa' of barley as Zakat al-Fitr on every Muslim slave or free, male or female, young or old, and he ordered that it be paid before the people went out to offer the Eid prayer. [Bukhari]

It is obligatory on all males and females as per the majority of the scholars including Imams Malik, Shafi'i and Ahmad. The only person to hold an opposing view of it being recommended and not obligatory is the esteemed Imam Abu Hanifa. Zakat al-Fitr is not obligated upon non-Muslims. Zakat is a form of purification. Non-Muslims cannot be purified unless they become Muslim.

There is no mention of nisab in the narration as a condition for Zakat al-Fitr unlike as in Zakat al-Maal. The Hanafi madhab states that anyone who meets the condition of nisab is obligated to pay zakat al-fitr even if what he owns is in the form of clothes or furniture etc. Nisab is the equivalent in cash, gold silver, merchandise, etc worth of 85 grams of gold. This position restricts zakat al-fitr quite a lot and it is best to make it inclusive of all. As per the majority of the scholars, as long as a person has enough to eat for himself and his dependants for the day of Eid, zakat al-fitr becomes obligatory upon him.

It is best for each individual to pay for themselves and if not possible then the guardian can pay on behalf of everyone he is in charge or responsible of. If people are dependent on someone, then that person is obligated to pay on their behalf.

Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "There is no Zakat to be paid on one's slave, except for Zakat al-Fitr (indicating that a Muslim must pay it on behalf of all of those he is responsible for)." [Muslim]

Imam Ibn Qudamah رحمه الله said, "Anyone who gets married, has a baby born to him or becomes Muslim before the sun sets on that day, has to give Zakat al-Fitr (on behalf of himself and/or his new wife or new baby), but if that happens after sunset, he does not have to give it... Whoever dies after sunset on the night of fitr, sadaqat al-fitr must be given on his behalf. This is what Ahmad stated." [al-Mughni]

Imam al-Shafi'i رحمه الله explained the distribution and said, "Everyone who, at the beginning of Shawwal, has enough food for himself and those whom he is supporting, for that day, and has enough to give Zakat al-Fitr on behalf of them and himself, should give it on behalf of them and himself. If he only has enough to give on behalf of some of them, then he should give on behalf of some of them.



If he only has enough for himself and those whom he is supporting, then he is not obliged to give Zakat al-Fitr on his own behalf or on behalf of those whom he is supporting." [al-Umm]

Imam al-Nawawi رحمه الله said, "The one who is in financial difficulty is not obliged to give (Zakat al-Fitr); there is no difference among the scholars in this regard. The obligation is determined by whether or not a person can afford it. Whoever has one saa' more than he needs for himself and those whom he is obliged to support on the night and day of Eid, has enough [is not in financial difficulty]. Whoever does not have anything more than he needs is in financial difficulty, so he is not obliged to pay anything in this case." [al-Majmu']

Scholars state that when a person is calculating his Zakat al-Fitr, and one whose behalf he should pay, he should start with himself and then the closest people first. So, the person gives it on behalf of himself, then his wife, then his children, then his parents, then the rest of his relatives in order of closeness, following the pattern laid out in the rules governing inheritance. Likewise, if a person has limited money but more than enough such that Zakat al-Fitr becomes obligatory, then a person follows the same sequence for whom he pays to an extent till it is no longer obligatory upon him to pay Zakat al-Fitr.



Imam al-Shafi'i رحمه الله summarized this and said, "Who I say is obliged to give Zakat al-Fitr, if a child is born to him, or he takes possession of a slave, or someone becomes one of his dependents, at any time during the last day of Ramadan, then the sun sets on the night of the crescent of Shawwal, he has to give Zakat al-Fitr on that person's behalf." [al-Umm]

There is a difference of opinion with regards to paying zakat al-fitr on behalf of the foetus but it is best to do so to remain on the safe side as this was something established from Uthman Ibn Affan. Imam Ahmad رحمه الله holds that Zakat al-Fitr is also obligatory for an foetus, because it is permissible to assign property to an foetus by means of a will. This is when the soul has been breathed into it, i.e. it is more than four months old, before which it is not considered to be alive since the soul is only breathed into it after that time.

But I did not fast, why should I pay this zakat? Even if a person did not fast, they are obliged to pay zakat al-fitr as long as they are Muslim. The word "young" in the hadith narrations includes small children and women those who are menstruating or pregnant who cannot fast.



Sheikh Saleh al-Munajjad حفظه الله explained, "Zakat al-Fitr is prescribed because it is a purification for the one who fasted, but attaining this purification is not a condition of it being obligatory. A similar case is the zakat of one's wealth, which has also been prescribed in order to purify the soul: "Take Sadaqah (alms) from their wealth in order to purify them and sanctify them with it, and invoke Allaah for them. Verily, your invocations are a source of security for them; and Allaah is All-Hearer, All-Knower" [Surah al-Tawbah, 103]. Despite that zakat is obligatory in the case of wealth belonging to a small child who does not need to be purified, because no bad deeds are recorded for him."

Sheikh Ibn Jibreen رحمه الله gave another very interesting explanation and said, "It is paid on behalf of children and those who are not accountable, and those who did not fast because of an excuse such as sickness or travel. So the purification is for the guardians of those who are not accountable, and it is a purification for the one who did not fast because of an excuse, on the assumption that he will fast once the excuse is no longer in effect, so it is purification in advance, before he fasts or completes his fast." [Fatawa al-Zakat]



Sheikh Ibn al-Uthaymeen رحمه الله writes, "Owing a debt does not exempt a person from paying the zakat unless he cannot afford to pay the zakat after paying the debt. This is because the debt must be paid when sought and it is payable, due to the Prophet's ﷺ words, "It is wrong for a person to delay paying his debt if he can afford to pay it." [Bukhari] Hence, if he has to pay his debt, he must pay and he becomes exempt from the zakat if that is all he has." [Sharh al-Mumti']



When is it Due?

Zakat al-Fitr is a time-restricted act of worship. It becomes obligatory when the sun sets on the last day of Ramadan. The best time to give it is between the Fajr and Eid Prayer. The Zakat must be paid before Eid Salah. For this reason it is Sunnah to delay the Eid prayer on Eid al-Fitr so as to allow enough time for those who have to give Zakat al-Fitr to do so, and to have something to eat before coming for the prayer.

The practice of some of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ was to pay Zakat al-Fitr one or two days before Eid (on 28, 29 or 30 of Ramadan).

Imam Naafi' رحمه الله said: "Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه used to give on behalf of the young and the old, and he even used to give on behalf of my sons. He would give to those who took it, and it would be given a day or two before (Eid) al-Fitr." [Bukhari]

Can it be paid even earlier? If a person is afraid that there is not enough time for the money to reach a certain place and for food to be bought and distributed before Eid, then it can be collected and paid off before as well. This is permissible even if that is before Ramadan.

If not on a personal basis, one can appoint someone trustworthy to buy and distribute Zakat al-Fitr on your behalf.

The final distribution though, should not happen except at the prescribed time. This is what is usually seen in countries like Malaysia etc where the government has taken the responsibility to collect and disburse of zakat al-fitr for the public. Giving it at anytime throughout or from the beginning of Ramadan is the position adopted by the Hanafi and Shafi'i madhaib.

We learn that at the time of the Prophet ﷺ, zakat al-fitr used to be collected beforehand and kept in Masjid al-Nabawi so that it could be distributed in time to the poor and needy. This is seen as narrated by Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه in the long narration where he encountered Shaitan trying to steal from the zakat.

If it is paid after the Eid prayers, then it is counted only as normal charity and the rewards of Zakat al-Fitr are missed out. So make sure you pay it before that.

Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ obligated Zakat al-Fitr as purification of the fasting person from vain talk and misbehaviour, as food for the poor. Whoever pays it before the Eid prayer, it is accepted as Zakat. Whoever pays it after the Eid prayer, it is part of voluntary charity. [Abu Dawud]



The head of the household is responsible for making sure Zakat al-Fitr has been paid. If the children cannot pay it themselves, the head of the household should pay on their behalf.

What if the payment is delayed? Imam Shamsul Haqq al-'Azeemabadi رحمه الله wrote, "Obviously, the one who gives Zakat al-Fitr after the prayer is like one who did not give it, because they have in common the fact that they did not give this obligatory charity. Most of the scholars think that giving it before Salat al-Eid is only mustahab, and they confirmed that it is fine to give it at any time until the end of the day of Fitr, but this opinion is refuted by the hadith. With regard to delaying it until after the day of Eid, Ibn Ruslaan said: "This is haram by consensus, because it is zakat (it is bound by time), so the one who delays it must be committing a sin, as is the case when one delays a prayer." [Awn al-Ma'bood]

Even if a person has gone past the designated time, they still have to pay it and clear the obligation from one's shoulders as it is a form of debt that needs to be cleared. Yet, it will be counted only as charity and not zakat al-fitr.



If a person has a valid excuse for not issuing his zakat before the Eid prayer, he may issue it afterwards without blame. This is analogous to the case of the one who misses a prayer due to oversleeping or insanity.

It was narrated that Abu Qatadah رضي الله عنه said: "They told the Prophet (ﷺ) that they had slept and missed the prayer. He said: 'There is no negligence when one sleeps, rather negligence is when one is awake. If any one of you forgets a prayer or sleeps and misses it, let him pray it when he remembers it.'" [Ibn Majah]

Imam Ibn Qudamah رحمه الله said, "If he delays it (zakat al-fitr) until after the day of Eid, he is sinning and he has to make it up." [al-Mughni]

For someone that was not practicing and started practicing later in life, they have to pay the due of zakat as well. This is because Zakat Al-Fitr was the poor people's right and they did not receive it, hence, it takes the ruling similar to any other debt. Even if the dependants under him are now eligible to pay their own Zakat al-Fitr, he is required to hasten to give it because - for all those years it was obligatory upon him. Why? The Prophet ﷺ said: "The debt of Allah is worthier of being paid back." [Bukhari and Muslim]



Where Should it be Paid?

It is better to give Zakat al-Fitr to the poor in one's own country. However if there is a more needy country, then it can be sent abroad.

Imam al-Shafi'i رحمه الله said, "I prefer to share out Zakat al-Fitr myself rather than give it to the one who is collecting it."

Sheikh Ibn al-Uthaymeen رحمه الله said, "If the one who wants to give zakat appoints someone else to give it on his behalf, he is still responsible for it until he is certain that his deputy has carried out his instructions." [Ahkam Zakat al-Fitr]

The Sheikh further adds, "The donation must reach the recipient or the recipient's representative before the (Eid) prayer. The recipient may make the donor his representative (i.e. he asks the donor to hold onto the donation for him until a scheduled time)....It is not enough for a donor to say to the recipient, "I have some zakat for you," until the recipient actually receives the donation or makes the donor his representative." [Sharh al-Mumti']

Imam Ibn Qudamah رحمه الله said, "As for Zakat al-Fitr, it should be shared out in the country where it became obligatory, whether a person has wealth there or not, because it is the reason why zakat became obligatory..." [al-Mughni]

Travelling does not waive the obligation of zakat al-Fitr. A person has to pay Zakat al-Fitr wherever he is located at the time it becomes obligatory. As for the dependents like his wife and children, it is best to pay Zakat al-Fitr for them in the same country where they are located.

Another wisdom that scholars mention for zakat to be distributed where one is living is for the people around him to benefit and also to make sure that the symbols of the Islamic identity are maintained and propagated in the society. It is a form of education as well for the children when they see such acts of worship being carried out by their family.





What Should be Paid?

Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri رضي الله عنه said: "We used to discharge it (Zakat al-Fitr) in the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ as a Saa' of food, and our food was dates, and barley, and raisins and cottage cheese." [Bukhari]

Imam al-Tirmidhi رحمه الله said, "This is acted upon by some of the people of knowledge. Their view is that a portion (saa') of any food is valid; it is the opinion of Al-Shafi'i, Ahmad, and Ishaq. Some of the people of knowledge among the companions of the Prophet and others said a portion of any food is valid, except for wheat, for which is it permissible to give a half portion; it is the opinion of Sufyan al-Thawri, Ibn al-Mubarak, and the people of Kufah." [Tirmidhi]

One Saa' of food, dried dates, barley, raisins, dried cheese or whatever is the staple food of the country. It should not be paid in the form of cash unless it is the ultimate final option. We have Zakat al-Maal for that. The strongest position with regards to what is to be given as Zakat al-Fitr is that it should be the staple food of the country and not just restricted to dates or barley.

Imam Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله explains, "If it was said, 'You must give a saa' of dates everywhere, whether it is the staple food or not,' this is a disputed matter which is subject to ijtihad. There are some people who say that it is obligatory, and others who say that in each country it is obligatory to give a saa' of whatever is the staple food there, as the Prophet ﷺ specified five types of food for Zakat al-Fitr, so in each country they can give the equivalent of a saa' of their staple food.

This is more correct, and is closer to the principles of Shariah, for how can you make it obligatory for people whose staple food is fish, for example, or rice or pearl millet, to give dates? ... And Allah is the Source of strength. " [I'laam al-Muwaqqi'een]

There used to be two measurements by the same name of Saa' that were used by the people: Saa' al-Hijazi and Saa' al-Iraqi. The saa' mentioned in the ahadith refers to the Saa' al-Hijazi.

An interesting story occurs here. The Ahnaf opined that the Saa' in question was the Saa' al-Iraqi. Once, Imam Abu Hanifa's primary student Imam Abu Yusuf رحمه الله came for Hajj and met Imam Malik رحمه الله in Madinah. He asked him about the measurement of the Saa' and Imam Malik said, "Five and one-third ratls." Abu Yusuf said, "What's your basis for saying that?" Imam Malik said to some of the people with him, "Go and fetch the saa's that you have."



So many of the people of Madinah, (from the families of) both the Muhajirun and the Ansar, came, and every one of them brought a saa' (with him) and said, "This is the saa' which I inherited from my father, who inherited it from his father, who was one of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ." Imam Malik said, "This sort of widespread knowledge is more reliable in our opinion than hadith." So Imam Abu Yusuf accepted Imam Malik's opinion that the Saa' mentioned and its measurement was indeed Saa' al-Hijazi. The Saa' of Madinah has its own sanad and it is passed on till date. I was blessed to attain a sanad to this in Madinah in 1443 AH.

What is this Saa' al-Hijazi? 1 Saa' of the Prophet ﷺ is four complete scoops as scooped up with two cupped hands (like one does while making dua). A Mudd is the volumetric measure of what two cupped hands of an average man can hold. In modern measurements, a mudd is 0.75L, which means that a saa' is 3.0L. Since volumes of different items differ in mass according to how heavy or light the item is, scholars have taken good quality dense wheat as a standard, which is equivalent in its weight to lentils. Based on this measurement of food in kilograms, some scholars approximate it to be 2.2kg while some approximate it to be 3kg. This discrepancy occurs because a saa' is a measure of volume and not weight. Hence, it is always better to give a bit more to be on the safe side.



One Saa' (صاع) = Four Mudd (مد)

Some of the Maliki scholars went a step forward and became very strict in terms of the amount distributed and their point of view also holds strong weight and showcases their love for adhering to the Sunnah. In his commentary on Mukhtasar Khaleel, Ash-Sheikh ad-Dardeer رحمه الله says, "It is recommended not to provide more than a saa'; rather, it is disliked to do so. This is because the Prophet ﷺ defined the exact amount that is to be paid and, therefore, paying extra should be a disliked innovation in the religion. This is just like saying extra tasbeeh after the thirty three times (after prayers)."

On the flip side, Sheikh Ibn al-Uthaymeen رحمه الله states, "A person does not have to donate more than a saa'. If he possesses more than his provision for the night and day of Eid but it is less than a saa', he gives that amount, and he is not exempt. So, if he has half a saa' left after his daily provision, he must donate that half, because Allah says, "Save yourself from Allah's punishment to the best of your ability." [Sharh al-Mumti']

This discussion of daily needs or provision is where the Hanafi opinion of nisab comes in. According to Imams Malik, al-Shafi'i and Ahmad, the required provision is the daily bread and the daily bread of those for whom the person is responsible for.

Imam Abu Hanifa stipulates that they must own at least the niṣab of Zakat on top of his house, furniture, clothes, horse, weapons, and slave.

Imam Ahmad رحمه الله stated that it is permissible to distribute one saa' among a group of people, or to give the entirety of the zakat to one person as well.



The Flip Side

Even during the Prophet ﷺ there were many poor sahaba but none of the sahaba paid zakat al-fitr as money as per the most authentic reports.

Sheikh Ibrahim Nuhu حفظه الله mentions the benefit of giving food for Zakat al-Fitr instead of money: "Either the person eats it and satisfies the hunger or sells it to make a profit. When he wants to sell it he'll have to make an effort for it and this will teach him about business. If you just give money, they'll spend it and beg again. This is a way how the Sunnah indirectly teaches the people to both meet their needs and also learn how to sustain themselves."

Likewise, Sheikh Ibn al-Uthaymeen رحمه الله said, "Some people say that if we give the poor people saa' of food and they go and sell it. We see them do so in front of us and they sell it for half the price or less or more. So we say to this: we have nothing to do with the action of the poor. It is upon us to do that what we have been commanded with. We say: we hear and obey, and we sacrifice the food, then the poor who possess it can choose to do what they want with it.

If they want they can eat it, if they want they can store it, if they want they can sell it, if they want they can gift it and if they want they can give it as charity on their own behalf.

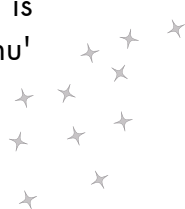
There is nothing upon us if they do this. What we have been commanded to do is to give them an amount of food." [Fatawa al-Haram al-Makki]

The only school that does allow the payment of zakat al-fitr in the form of cash instead is the Hanafi madhab. May Allah bless the scholars and Imams of the madhab. They were preceded in this position by Imam Hasan al-Basri, Imam Abu Ishaq al-Sabi'i, and Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz.

Umar Ibn 'Abdul-'Aziz: Waqi' narrated through Qura who said, "We received a letter from 'Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz رحمه الله concerning zakat al-fitr. It said, 'Half a saa' for each person or its equivalent of half a dirham.' [Ibn Abi Shaybah] This shows that it was a legal order enforced throughout the caliphate.

It was reported that Qadhi Abu Yusuf رحمه الله said: "To me, it is better to give flour than wheat. And giving the value in money is better to me than flour and wheat, as that is closer to warding off the need of the poor."

Sheikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله also to some extent allows Zakat al-Fitr to be given in cash only in the case of a necessity. He wrote, "The apparent opinion is that giving out the equivalent value without a necessity or an overwhelming interest is forbidden. Otherwise, there is no harm." [Majmu' al-Fatawa].



Similarly, the opinion maintaining that the obligation of Zakat al-Fitr is fulfilled by giving out the equivalent value in cash was mentioned in a report from Imam Ahmed which Imam al-Mawardi رحمه الله cited in his Al-Insaf. Both the Maliki and Hanbali schools have secondary positions within the madhab that allow the payment in cash.

A very interesting evidence to back this position is the judgement of Mu'adh Ibn Jabal رضي الله عنه as the Governor of Yemen. Imam Bukhari records that Mu'adh told the people of Yemen to give him clothes and robes in lieu of grain, since giving cloth would be easier for them, and more useful for the people of Madinah, where the zakat was headed.

Here, Mu'adh did not take their zakat in the way it normally would have been taken (sheep, goats, grain, silver, gold), but rather took its equivalent in another commodity. The Prophet ﷺ described Mu'adh as being the most knowledgeable of the matters of halal and haram.

Imam al-Sarkhasi al-Hanafi رحمه الله wrote, "It is permissible in our school to give out the value of wheat since the criterion is fulfilling the needs of the people and this is met by giving zakat al-fitr in cash as well as in the form of wheat grain. (However), Al-Shafi'i maintains that this is impermissible.



The differences in opinion (on whether Zakat al-Fitr is to be paid in cash or in kind) are based on (the scholarly differences over) the payment of zakat on crops.

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Abu Bakr al-A'mash (may Allah be have mercy on him) used to say: 'It is better to give out (zakat al-fitr) as wheat grain than to give out its equivalent value because this is closer to conforming with the apparent meaning of the Prophetic hadith on the subject and evades the scholarly differences and is therefore, more religiously cautious.'

(On the other hand), the scholar Abu Ja'far used to say, 'It is better to give out the equivalent value (of Zakat al-Fitr) because this is closer to benefitting the poor who will be able to buy their immediate needs.' The reason for specifying wheat grain and barley at the time of the Prophet was because they were used for barter at that time.



But here, currency which is the medium of exchange, is used and so it is better to give out (Zakat al-Fitr) in cash." [Al-Mabsut]

Based on the above, it is best to remain on the safe side and give Zakat al-Fitr in the form of staple food and not in cash. If the argument is to merely aid the person, then we have Zakat al-Maal and normal sadaqah to cover for that. What is the need to change this once a year restricted act of worship for this?

That being said, it needs to be remembered that there is a valid difference of opinion on the matter and the people following the advice of their teachers are to be respected and not rebuked as they have done what Allah has asked them to do and ask a person of knowledge.

Imam Sufyan al-Thawri رحمه الله said, "As for the issues about which the jurists differed: I do not denounce any of my brothers from acting on them." [Al-Faqih wal-Mutafaqih]

Imam al-Suyuti رحمه الله said, "What is differed upon is not to be denounced. Denunciation only takes place [if someone opposes] the agreed upon." [al-Ashbah]



Limited Time Offer: 6 Fasts of Shawwal

The next month that we enter with the ending of Ramadan is the month of Shawwal. If a person sights the moon for Shawwal, does he stop fasting and celebrate Eid the next day? Isn't fasting on Eid haram? No. It cannot be said that the next day is Eid because as we mentioned previously two upright witnesses are needed to sight the moon to mark the end of a month. Till this is met, the month is fasted to completion.

More than fifteen Sahabah have reported about the fasting of Shawwal from the Messenger of Allah

ﷺ.

Abu Ayyub al-Ansari رضي الله عنه reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Whoever fasts the month of Ramadan and then follows it with six days of fasting in the month of Shawwal, it will be as if he fasted for the entire year." [Muslim]

It is related from Thawban that the Prophet ﷺ said: "The fast of Ramadan is like observing ten months of fasting. Fasting six days of Shawwal is like observing two months of fasting. This together is like fasting throughout the year." [Ahmad]

Imam an-Nawawi رحمه الله explains, "Scholars have explained that it is like observing a year of fasting because the reward of one's good deeds are multiplied tenfold. Therefore fasting the month of Ramadan is like fasting for ten months and fasting six days in the month of Shawwal is like fasting for two months." [Sharh Sahih Muslim]



Can we fast the 6 of Shawwal before making up our missed/broken Ramadan fasts?

Firstly, the intentions of Ramadan and Shawwal fasts cannot be merged into one day as one is an obligatory act whereas the other is a voluntary act of worship. A minority opinion championed by some Shafi'i and Maliki scholars allows dual intentions. Imam al-Ramli رحمه الله issued a fatwa that said that a person who makes up the missed days from Ramadan in Shawwal, even if he intends other than the fast of Shawwal, obtains the reward for the six days of Shawwal.

How would this mixing of intentions work? As per these scholars, one may combine the pending Ramadan fasts with the six fasts of Shawwal provided the principle intention (niyyah) is of qadha fasts, and just as a secondary intention have in one's mind the fasts of Shawwal. It is hoped from the Mercy of Allah that along with the missed fasts being made-up, one will receive the reward of fasting in Shawwal. Even here, technically the scholars have not allowed combining the intention of an obligatory pending fast and a voluntary fast together. It is best to not mix intentions to stay on the safe side

As for the order of fasting, then this is a matter scholars have differed on and debated for centuries. The best and safest opinion is to make up the pending Ramadan fasts first and then do the Shawwal fasts. Why? Because the Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever fasts the month of Ramadan". This would indicate that the Shawwal fasts are connected to Ramadan and also have the pre-requisite of completing the fasts of Ramadan first. This is the prime position of the Hanabilah.

But it's not always this easy, especially for women. By the time she has done completing her missed Ramadan fasts, her menses for Shawwal have come in and now she will miss more days. As per our Sheikh Ibrahim Nuhu حفظه الله, it is better for her to go for the six days of Shawwal first and then make up the pending fasts later. Why? Because it was narrated that Aishah رضي الله عنها said, "I would own fasts from Ramadan and I would not make them up until Shaban (nearly a year later) came." [Nasai]

Also because the virtue of the fasts of Shawwal is limited to this month alone (primary Hanbali position), whereas the pending fasts of Ramadan can be made up at any point of the year.



Imam al-Buhuti رحمه الله wrote, "The virtue of fasting them – i.e., the six days of Shawwal – cannot be attained at any time other than Shawwal, because of the apparent meaning of the reports." [Kashshaaf al-Qina']

Another group of Maliki and some Hanbali scholars opine that this virtue may be attained by the one who fasts six days in Shawwal or even afterward. The ahadith mentioned Shawwal only to make things easier since fasting them after Ramadan is easier than doing it later on as the person is in a flow and rhythm.

Imam al-'Adawi رحمه الله wrote, "The Lawgiver only mentioned Shawwaa in order to make it easier with regard to fasting, not to restrict the ruling to that time only. No doubt doing it in the first ten days of Dhu'l Hijjah along with what was narrated concerning the virtue of fasting at that time is better because the purpose is achieved in addition to the extra reward for fasting on virtuous days. Doing it in Dhul Qa'dah is also good. To sum up: The later you fast them, the greater the reward because it is more difficult." [Sharh al-Khurashi]



Imam Ibn Muflih رحمه الله wrote, "It is possible that the reward may be attained even when fasting them at a time other than Shawwaal, according to some scholars. This was mentioned by al-Qurtubi because the virtue of that is based on the fact that one good deed (hasanah) will be rewarded tenfold, as it says in the report of Thawban. And the recommendation of fasting in Shawwal is because it is easier to fast as one is already used to fasting, and this is a kind of dispensation, and it is more appropriate to avail oneself of the dispensation. [al-Furu']

Imam al-Mardawi رحمه الله commented on it by saying: I say, "This view is weak and is contrary to the hadith. Rather it is connected to the virtue of Ramadan because it comes immediately after it and not because the good deed is rewarded tenfold, and because fasting them is equal to the obligatory fast of Ramadan in virtue." [al-Insaf]

Another important benefit of fasting the 6 days of Shawwal is that it makes up for any deficiencies in one's obligatory Ramadan fasts. Also, on the Day of Judgement, the sunnah acts will help cover the deficiencies of the fardh acts.



Why? The Prophet ﷺ said, "The first thing for which people will be brought to account on the Day of Resurrection will be their salah (prayer). Our Lord, may He be glorified and exalted, will say to His angels – although He knows best – 'Look at the salah of My slave, whether it is complete or incomplete.' If it is perfect, it will be recorded as perfect, and if something is lacking, He will say, 'Look and see whether My slave did any voluntary (nafl) prayers.' If he did some voluntary prayers, (Allah) will say, Complete the obligatory actions of My slave from his voluntary actions.' Then all his actions will be dealt with in a similar manner." [Abu Dawud].





Mix n Match Intentions

If this was not enough, we can maximize our rewards even more by strategically combining our intentions of the six fasts of Shawwal with other Sunnah fasts namely - fasting the three white days and fasting on Mondays and Thursdays. Why?

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "The deeds are presented on Monday and Thursday. Thus, I love for my deeds to be presented while I am fasting." [Tirmidhi]

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to me: "It is sufficient for you to fast three days every month because for every good deed, you will have (the reward of) ten like it, so that will be like fasting for a lifetime." [Bukhari and Muslim]

This also shows that the fasts of Shawwal don't have to be kept consecutively, and can be moved around as per a person's convenience as long as it is after the Day of Eid (1 Shawwal). Fasting on the day of eid is haram by consensus of the scholars. The best is to get them done asap because Allah says, "So compete in good deeds." [Surah al-Ma'idah, 48]

Imam Ibn Qudamah رحمه الله said, "There is no difference between fasting these days consecutively or fasting them separately; at the beginning of the month or at its last days because the hadith is general and does not limit fasting these days within a given period of time during the month."





Did Imam Malik Dislike Fasting Shawwal? ★

It is attributed that some scholars regarded fasting six days in the month of Shawwal to be something disliked. This view has been related from Imams Malik and Abu Hanifa.

Yahya said that he heard Malik say, "I have not heard that any of our predecessors used to do that, and the people of knowledge disapprove of it, and they are afraid that it might become a bid'ah and that common and ignorant person might join to Ramadan what does not belong to it, if they were to think that the people of knowledge had given permission for that to be done and were seen doing it." [Muwatta]

It is clear from the full statement that the main argument is that they feared for the general public to misconstrue fasting these six days to be something obligatory. They also see it as emulating the People of the Scripture to exceed the number of fasting days in the prescribed month of fasting.

In a narration from Imam Malik رحمه الله, it is reported that he never saw any scholars and the people of fiqh fast as such, and the narrations from the salaf about the six days of fasting in Shawwal did not reach him.

There are also some scholars that ruled it undesirable, fearing that the people that do not have any knowledge would think that the fasting is part of Ramadan. [Sharh az-Zarqani]

According to Sheikh ad-Dusuqi رحمه الله, the ruling of these fasts being makruh is only applicable when it is feared that people would confuse Shawwal and Ramadan. Furthermore, it is ruled makruh for people that consider the rewards to be attained only for those that perform fasting continuously. If not, then it is permissible. [Hahiyah ad-Dasuqi]

Imam al-Nawawi رحمه الله commenting on Imam Malik's statement saying that there are no scholars in his time that practice the six days of fasting said, "When something is sunnah and established, even when the sunnah is neglected by some or all people, it should not be renounced or abandoned."

Imam Malik's opinion of it being disliked doesn't really apply today as the 'illah that he used - worried that people would consider the six days of fasting as a part of Ramadan - is not an issue because of the technology and advancements in communications that we have now.

It has been narrated by Mutarrif that Imam Malik رحمه الله himself used to fast six days in the month of Shawwal.



Honestly, it is highly unlikely that Imam Malik was not aware of the hadith since it is a hadith narrated in Madinah. It is reported that Imam Malik used to fear leading people to believe that a recommended act was an obligation. Therefore, he would refrain from certain actions in front of the masses who could misunderstand.

Also, this narration of fasting the six days of Shawwal has been reported not just from Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, but from over 7-8 different companions رضي الله عنهم and this should put the matter to rest completely.



Conclusion

Ramadan is the best of the months and our Prophet ﷺ was the best of mankind. A parable comes to mind. See how in the life of the Prophet ﷺ the people got close to him, loved, raced, and increased in good deeds. They could literally feel a connection with Allah in their hearts.

Compare this with what happens during Ramadan. We get closer to the Qur'an and Sunnah, and we leave the bad and try our level best to do as many good deeds as possible. We find a sweetness in connecting with Allah with our extra worship.

When the Prophet ﷺ passed away those who had internalized what he came with held on to the truth and those who were just show faltered away. Similarly with Ramadan, those who change will continue in good and those who were just show will fall back to what they did prior to Ramadan.

I'll add to what Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه said to the people when our Prophet passed away. Our Prophet ﷺ was a man who passed away but His Lord does not die, so worship Him. Ramadan is a month that will surely pass away soon. In it we worship and come close to the same Allah whom we transgress against in the other months. Our Rabb is ALWAYS there for us so let us worship Him as He deserves to be worshipped so we may be enveloped in His mercy.

Game Plan for Ramadan

- Whatever hurdles might arise, use this Ramadan to reboot and start over a clean slate. It's never too late to return to Allah's Mercy.
- Don't look down on the "Ramadan Muslims" rather help them out and show them some love and appreciation. We all needed it at some point. Your help could make a world's difference for them.
- Ramadan is the month of the Qur'an. Leave everything else and focus on the Book of Allah. Don't make it an aim to just finish the Qur'an somehow but rather try to understand it. Better still, start and try to just understand Surah Baqarah properly instead of going Imam Ferrari on the whole Qur'an. (of course, it's better to read as much as possible). Pick a Tafseer to accompany your Qur'an and stick to it. Fix that Tajweed while you're at it.
- Taraweeh is an Ibadah, not a mere checklist. You don't have to finish the whole Qur'an in like 3 days and then no more taraweeh, because you know Ramadan business is booming. Again, it's not about merely finishing the Qur'an. Imagine the awkward moment when you stand 20 raka'at in taraweeh and then miss Fajr and Dhuhr salahs. This is the ultimate loss and a sign of ignorance of the highest order.



- Give charity like crazy in Ramadan. Believe me, Allah will show you results within Ramadan itself. Giving never reduces, only increases. If charity out of Ramadan is multiplied by Allah, then we can only imagine what's the reward for giving charity in Ramadan.
- Don't go all out immediately while breaking the fast. Take it easy. Drink water at regular intervals and by no means miss suhur.
- Make loads of dua. Not just for yourself but for others too. That would increase the chance of the dua being accepted. On that note, also learn the adab of making dua to increase the chances of acceptance. Focus more on duas from the Sunnah for they are easy to memorize and most comprehensive.
- Iftar gatherings are good, but if that becomes the only highlight of the month then we are definitely losing the plot.
- Mothers/Wives also NEED Ramadan as much as you. It's not a month for them to spend in the kitchen. Help out as much as possible. This is not a month of selfishness, but of teamwork and maximizing the most of this blessed time.
- Refrain from getting into unnecessary debates, fights, arguments, bargaining, shopping, and backbiting. Just not worth it.

Imam Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله said, "There is no honor for one's soul except with submission (to Allah), no glory except with subservience (to Allah), no comfort except with weariness (for the sake of Allah), no satiation except with hunger (for the sake of Allah i.e. fasting), no security except with fear (of Allah), no pleasure except with feeling alienated from everything but its Creator, and no life except with death." [al-Fawa'id]

Imam Ibn al-Jawzi رحمه الله said, "Fasting is the best act of worship because it is the gateway to worship. Allah has made this month a means of expiating great sins. You need to know that all sins in reality are great because in sin we are disobeying the Supreme Lord. They used to say, 'Don't look at how small your sin is, look at the greatness of the One you are disobeying! May Allah forgive us and save us from disobeying Him.

Servants of Allah, fear Him! Lower your gaze in this great month, and in all other months. Don't look at what is forbidden. Control your tongues and don't violate the honour of your Muslim brothers and sisters. Give lots of charity to the poor and needy. Spend your nights in prayer. Let your eyes shed tears. Beg your Lord to save you from slipping and falling. In this way, we pray that He will change our evil deeds to good." [Bustan al-Wa'izeen]



I leave you all with the advice of Imam Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali رحمه الله who said,

"Slaves of Allah! The month of Ramadan is determined to leave and there are but a few days left of it. Those of you who have done good should complete it (in goodness) and whoever has neglected it then let him end it in goodness since actions are according to their endings. So enjoy the few nights and days that are left and bid it farewell by performing good deeds which can be a witness for you with Al-Malik Al-'Alaam, and see it off by parting with the most pure greeting and salam."
[Lataif al-Ma'arif]



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